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Speaking from Places: A Phenomenological Deconstructive Study of Children's Places, Child-Centric Methods, and Politics.

Sugandh Dixit

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SPEAKING FROM PLACES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY OF
CHILDREN'S PLACES, CHILD-CENTRIC METHODS, AND POLITICS.

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Sugandh Dixit

August 2018

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Sugandh Dixit

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By
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ABSTRACT

SPEAKING FROM PLACES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S PLACES, CHILD-CENTRIC METHODS, AND POLITICS

By

Sugandh Dixit

August 2018

Dissertation supervised by Eva Maria Simms, Ph.D.

This dissertation adopts an innovative phenomenological and deconstructive methodology to create a child-centric research process sensitive to facilitating, integrating, and representing children's voices in designing their school playground. The study developed and employed two novel child-centric methods, an *Embedded Walk* and a *Communal Child-Map Project* in order to integrate parents' and children's experiences of the school spaces the authorities planned to renovate. Both methods reveal and complicate the socio-political dynamics that structure children's, parents', and researchers' stances towards children's places and worlds. During the *Embedded Walk*, children led their parents through their play spaces and they collaboratively documented the childrens' experiences of the places through drawings and written descriptions (ensemble voices). After the walk, in the *Communal Child Map Project* they marked these places with colored pins on a map of the school grounds created by the older children that was

displayed in the school hallway. Re-thinking and creating unique methods that prioritize children's perspectives signified a political change, entitling children to designate their own territories. Displaying their perspectives in a public space to an audience of adults and other children empowered their voices by shifting it from a private exchange with parents or peers to a communal dialogue.

The phenomenological part of this study presents children's experiential descriptions of their places in the world of the schoolyard and the diverse affordances these places provide. The deconstructive part of this study reveals how children find a place in an adult-centric world and how their place-making is impacted by the presence of adult-centric structures. In its commitment to understanding political activism as a transformative process, the author presents the subtle and profound shifts that the two methods, "embedded walk" and "Communal Child Map," introduced into the lives of parents and children by cultivating spaces for children to speak, and parents to listen differently. Interviews conducted with five mothers suggested that the insights realized during the study enabled distinct modes of seeing, engaging, and attuning parents to their children's places, activities, and desires. This fresh outlook impacted their relationship even beyond the study. Moving away from traditional academic structures where the researcher provides technocratic theories and specific steps to achieve child empowerment, this study builds on Derrida's notion of hospitality to propose an alternative model of empowerment. By analyzing an unexpected resistance movement organized by adolescents in the Child-Map study, the author argues that the ethos of child empowerment is surrendering to and receiving the gifts that children give to the researcher, by transforming, shifting directions, and according a new voice to the work: re-introducing them to their own research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and very common sight, To me did seem
Apparell'd in celestial light.

— William Wordsworth
Ode: Intimations of Immortality (1807)

What does it really mean to listen to children? Under what circumstances can we regard their voices as expressing informed and expert views and opinions? Throughout my engagement with children's voices during a Child-Map study conducted at the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh, a local elementary school, these questions have continued to reverberate for me, even to the point of becoming the ethos of my dissertation, the very spirit by which it sought both inspiration and being.

In the summer of 2013, I joined PlaceLab, a research group within my department at Duquesne University. As a graduate student in psychology for a while already, I joined primarily because academia had come to feel like an ivory tower where academics crafted their theories in splendid isolation from the broader community. Led by Dr. Eva Simms, PlaceLab, on the other hand, was expressly dedicated to community advocacy research that included voices of marginalized communities seeking to articulate the meaning and significance of their places and spaces and focused on community-led solutions to problems and concerns. Hence, when the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh approached PlaceLab to conduct research around their desire for developing the green spaces that children live and play in every day, PlaceLab was already sensitive to matters of place and space. I was especially interested in the Child-Map Study as it gave me an opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and application, as well as developing

research practices that encouraged children's voices in civic engagement. My involvement with PlaceLab was geared towards understanding the "place" (i.e., hierarchical position) of children in our social structure—as children often are out of place, displaced, or marginalized.

In October 2013, Dr. Simms and Ms. Denise Mahone (another graduate student and an active parent at the Waldorf School) presented the Waldorf Place study proposal at a PlaceLab meeting. Their proposal encompassed two different but interrelated projects: a selected group of adults participated in the *Goethean Place Study* (Simms, 2017), and all families in the school were invited to participate in the Child-Map Study. *The Goethean Place Study* was a unique attempt to explore the school grounds by asking parents to observe, meditate, and listen to the natural areas and places that surrounded the school premises. The exploration was followed by a group session where participants shared insights to inform the future changes needed in the school places. While I was involved as a team member and observer in the *Goethean Place Study*, I joined the Child-Map Study and became actively involved in its planning, development, and execution, no least because I felt the study gave voice to my deep commitment to including children's voices in community empowerment and creative political change. Through the Child-Map Study, children emerged as the most important collaborators, whose voices about and for their places had to be heard and included. In a series of meetings and conversations, Dr. Simms, Ms. Mahone, and I began developing *practices* that could become tools and a framework for aiding children and parents to voice their experiences of their places.

This dissertation adopts a phenomenological and deconstructive stance with which to investigate the critical questions that emerged for me throughout the Child-Map Study, particularly with respect to the dynamics of child-centric research, politics, empowerment, and children's voices. These divergent yet interrelated thematic queries are divided into three

sections: 1) To explore the spatiality of the playground and the political dynamics of space in the lives of children; 2) To understand the structural design of the Child-Map Study through key political episodes (Embedded Walk and Communal Child-Map Project) that contributed to the larger structural dimensions of research as transformative space; 3) To analyze a critical resistant moment in the Child-Map Study through the lens of hospitality and to speak about broader issues of child-centric research.

Speaking from My Own Peripheries

I perceive the world as a playground
Where dawn and dusk appear in eternal rounds
— Mirza Ghalib
The World is a Playground (1797)

Of course, my interest in and passion for working with children's voices is not incidental. As a scholar from India, my identity as a colonized subject became inevitably tied to the image of the child. Historically, colonized populations have been portrayed in infantilized terms, as racialized others in need of "nurturance and tutelage," who lacked the rational capacity to govern themselves (Werrelin, 2004). Indigenous inhabitants were expected to accept their own inherent inferiority and adapt to the governance of the mature parent.

In being reduced to the image of a child, our authority to write our own history was also taken away. As an indigenous member of Indian culture and society, my identity was imbricated within a history that was erased, written, and re-written by colonizers. Behar (1993) reminds us that "authorship is a privilege to which many of us are not born, but arrive at, often clumsily, often painfully, often through a process of self-betrayal and denial" (p. 338). I carried the grief of losing my voice and the ownership of my narratives and the pain of being written *about*: I have been the "subject," the colonizer the "speaker." My experiences have made me realize that the

colonizer-other writes carefully, mindful of the hegemonic and disciplining voice that legitimatizes knowledge, determining what is worthy of being heard and what is to be kept outside, silent, and colonized. “No need to hear your voice,” hooks (1989) wryly comments, “when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself” (p. 151).

While colonization introduced me to the systems of violence that erase voices of one’s culture with the label of immaturity by a powerfully entitled adult, growing up in India I realized that the practices of my own culture could also marginalize and silence the voices of vulnerable children. I witnessed the authority of parents and teachers who authored the lives of children, making me realize that in that context, writing oneself (having a voice and identity) itself was considered a crime. As young minds, we often recited the famous shlokas: “*Maatru devo bhava, pitru devo bhava, aachaarya devo bhava, athithi devo bhava*”¹ (Mother, Father, Guru and Guest, are all forms of God). In our culture, for children to question the authority of teachers and parents was taboo. The pervasive and unquestioned acceptance of adults’ authority was a critical instrument in disciplining children, maintaining the hierarchical position of adults, and marginalizing children’s voices. As a rebellious seventh-grader, I remember standing in front of my teacher with tears in my eyes. Despite the prohibition against speaking, I gathered all my courage and questioned her for humiliating my classmates. To my painful and brave challenge, she had only one reply: “This is my class. I decide the rules.” I had often lived in this space of not being heard, speaking what was obvious to me as a child and waiting for an understanding and acknowledgment from adults that never came. As a training psychologist in the United States, I came to recognize that this childhood pain “of not being listened to” has cross-cultural

¹ Being embedded in the oral tradition, the shlokas do not have specific dated references.

dimensions. My adult patients who had grown up in American culture also often recalled painful childhood memories of not being heard by adults and of yearning to claim authorship of their own voices.

These personal and cultural experiences have impacted my core values as an academic and clinician. In the midst of my struggle to reclaim authorship both for my own voices and for children's voices, research became another space that offered an opportunity to bridge the gap between the powerful and the powerless by sharing agency. In my research, I became invested in the following questions: How do children give voice to their lived experiences? How can adults attune our ears to hear them? And even if we include their voices, how can we really listen, acknowledge, believe, and validate their world?

I am acutely aware that my yearning to hear and listen to children's voices is also embedded in a desire to give voice to my own voices: displaced voices, ones who live on the peripheries and in exile, like false memories and fleeting apparitions.

Speaking about Children's Voices

My strong investment in studying child-centric research methods naturally led me to a rigorous literature review that documented well-designed studies in which children participated as co-researchers; these studies also evaluated the reliability, credibility and competence of children's involvement in research (Clark, 2007, 2010; Clark and Moss 2001; Johnson et al 2012; Kellett, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2010; Mayall, 2000; Mason & Danby, 2011; & Maglajlic, 2010). While surveying the academic literature did quench my intellectual thirst, participation in the Child-Map Study afforded an opportunity for me to personally engage with child-centric research practices. It is precisely this knowledge of lived experience of an event, on the one hand, and a removed, overly cognitive and abstract understanding of that event, on the other

hand, that I wanted to bridge in some way. This led me to a phenomenological research design which I believed afforded a forum for children to voice their lived experiences alongside and within their experiential understanding thereof.

Questions about the validity and inclusion of children's voices became particularly important following the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) declaration, specifically Article 12, which stipulates that "the child who is capable of forming his or her own views [has] the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child" and that these views should be "given due weight" (UNCRC, 1989, p. 4). Giving children's view "due weight" requires "adults to *listen* to children and not just *hear* what they have to say" (Kellett, 2010, p. 197). *Hearing* is a passive process in which researchers include children only as a token of participation but do not consider their views to be significant and valuable. In contrast, *listening* is an active participatory process in which researchers value children's perspectives and strive to share power in participation and decision making. Researchers (e.g. Christensen & Prout, 2002; Clark, 2010; Kellett, 2010; Mayall, 2000) have welcomed the new declaration (Article 12) as recognizing and advocating for children as unique and active participants, as well as co-researchers, in the research process.

The foundation of the Child-Map Study is rooted in these values of giving primacy to children's experiences. This fidelity towards children's experiences and voices marks an epistemic and philosophical shift in research from *working on* children to *working with* children. Dominated by earlier developmental stage-like models, the philosophical position of *working on* children operates from the position of lack. This position is particularly evident in Piaget's conception of the child as a primitive thinker, whose destiny unfolds through logic, and the corresponding research focuses on "discovering" a child who is not yet an adult (Welsh, 2013).

Epistemologically, such a focus privileges adult knowledge and positions children as developmentally insufficient and inferior to adults, thereby reifying positions of power and privilege. However, many researchers have begun to highlight social experience as a more reliable marker of competence than age (Johnson et al 2012; Kellett, 2010; & Maglajlic, 2010; Mason & Danby, 2011), and have advocated that children's competence is "'different' not 'lesser than' adults' competence" (Kellett, 2010, p. 197). Kellett (2010) argues that the skills of being a researcher are not synonymous with being an adult, and that when trained, children as young as nine years old have produced impactful work.

The effort to include children as equal participants in research has led to a growing body of research that supports the effectiveness of using children as co-researchers. Child-centric researchers also have recognized children as competent in advocating for the community and achieving significant political change and social transformations. To understand children's experience of travel, transportation, and safety concerns, Porter et al. (2010) in Ghana trained children with a series of workshops on research methods and ethics, then gave the children freedom to design their study, choose methods of data collection, and analyze their data. Choosing to work individually and in pairs, they adopted unique and creative methods, such as travel diaries, photographic journals, interviews, walking tours, or focus groups to capture the diverse challenges they faced while traveling. The reports and analysis of this study were discussed among school authorities and policy makers to develop solutions promoting children's comfortable and safe travel. Enright and Sullivan (2010) also co-created participatory research with children. Their three-year project included 15-19-year-old female co-researchers who designed, implemented, and evaluated their physical education (PE) curriculum. By using methods such as personal biography, a physical activity timeline, physical activity profiles,

perceptions of the purposes of physical activity and PE, and perceptions of the possibilities for PE, an eight-week collaborative curriculum was designed that allowed students to be accountable for their participation. Kellett (2010) also provides an example of research conducted by an 11-year-old girl in the United Kingdom about the impact of her father's use of a wheelchair on her everyday life. Using her own experiences, the child as co-researcher employed a combination of methods such as observing her travel experiences while walking and taking the bus and train, keeping a research diary, and writing her own memories and experiences. Her research captured painful experiences of being shouted at by the bus driver, fearing missing the bus stop, and being unable to plan impromptu train trips. Her work raised awareness at the Transport Department in the UK, allowing for the implementation of changes that could improve the life of individuals and other children accompanying wheelchair users. Oakley (1994) stresses that it is important not just to add children to research as a token, but to fully integrate this new epistemological position of children as expert in research practices. The political shift from *working on* children to *working with* children has added a rich tapestry of children's experiences that has not only contributed to policy making but has given political voice, acknowledgment, and authority to children to speak about their experiences, which can be invisible in an adult-centric world. This integrative shift informed our approach to the Child-Map Study.

Philosophical and Political Foundations of the Child-Map Study

With the Waldorf School's decision to redesign their playground, and consultations with PlaceLab under the guidance of Dr. Simms, we realized that children were the most important stakeholders, whose voices on behalf of their places had to be heard and included. At a political level, the ethos of our Child-Map Study drew from Simms's (2008) work *The Child and the World*, which acknowledges that the heart of political action is not merely a challenge to

authority, but the creation of spaces where the voices of the marginalized can be spoken, listened to, and included. These ideologies of political integration of diverse voices of the community was also an important value of the Waldorf School. Housed in a historical Victorian style mansion in the quiet and serene Bloomfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh, the school inhabits 248 students. The racial and ethnic backgrounds of the students is 30 percent non-white and 70 percent white (74 non-white and 174 white) and gender composition is 49 percent boys and 49 percent girls (123 boys and 125 girls). Thus, with parents and children occupying intersecting identities of race, class, ethnicity, age, and gender, the school not only appreciated giving space and place to different voices that co-existed in the school, but also considered collaboration and engagement of the community voices as significant.

Our Child-Map Study also resonated with this desire to give children and parents a voice in the place study process and to find out what their existing emotional connections to the place were. This listening becomes significant as there exists a fundamental difference between places for children and children's places: the places for children are institutionalized and designated, whereas children's places are found independently by children themselves (Rasmussen, 2004). This distinction poses a challenge in the planning for, and designing of, children's places by adults. Children often express antipathy and dissatisfactions towards adult designed play spaces that do not address children's needs, by not using them (Jansson, 2008). Researchers have acknowledged that the design of the school playground, its maintenance, and its care reflect the value and commitment that schools provide in understanding children's needs (Rasmussen, 2004; Titman, 1994). The reminder that *children's places* are not the same as places *for children*, and that the former often does not align with the perspective of adults and planners, raises questions about the protection of children's spaces. We were ethically aware that as researchers,

we needed to be attuned to how children find their places; otherwise, children's places and spaces can be "unapologetically destroyed" (Chawla, 2002, p. 19).

To be attuned to children's places was also important because within the ethos of the Waldorf School, play and play spaces were an integral part of the child's developmental life. Waldorf provided conscious and intense sensory access to aesthetics and places. At the Waldorf School, children's places were not equivalent to the popular term *playground*, which reduces children's play spaces into a small, paved space with fixed equipment such as swings, seesaws, and jungle gyms. Such a conception of children's play spaces can suffer from recess syndrome (Titman, 1999) – that is, time spent on school grounds is only seen as a break from the so called real learning period, and spaces often fail to accommodate the diverse developmental needs of children. In contrast, the Waldorf School acknowledged play spaces as an extension and part of the psychological development and educational life of children. Play spaces were thoughtfully designed to address the different developmental needs of children at various ages.

Children's places within the Waldorf boundaries were not only for intellectual or cognitive stimulation, but were thought to be significant for children to discover themselves, rejuvenate themselves, explore relationships, and develop a sense of care for each other and for the natural world. In the ecology of the school, children were encouraged to be receptive and intertwined with the spirit of the place. Places were not conceptualized as a distant geometrical space; rather, the school authorities were sensitive in considering that for children, places are a sensory encounter: children are attuned to gestures, smells, and even the tastes of the place. Since, in the ecology of the school, places were considered to be an essential part of children's psychological life, the school was sensitive to re-designing the school grounds thoughtfully. After all, an un-thought renovation would have led to the development of *places for children*

while destroying *children's places*.

Despite widespread acknowledgment that environments built for children might not address their developmental needs, there has been minimal collaboration between developmental psychologists and designers or architects. David and Weinstein (1987/2013) point out that the dissonance between space and need has been due to a lack of communication between professionals designing academic and play settings and investigators studying environments built for children. Child-centric researchers have advocated that adult planning, despite its best intentions, can run counter to the interests and desires of children. To address this, researchers such as Clark (2007) and Burke (2005) have incorporated children as primary researchers to study their preferred spaces and places for play. Einarsdottir, Dockett, and Perry (2013) have also used interviews effectively, in addition to photographs to study how children think about their early childhood educational settings and its play-spaces. The interviews elaborated diverse and individualized reasons for the children's photographs of their play spaces, which ranged from enjoying a play area in the company of friends to desiring to see their home from the playground. In a remarkable participatory action study conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, children proposed actions that could be taken to improve their role as members of the civil society, and presented their suggestions to municipal authorities for improvement of their play spaces. This research secured a number of outcomes for children in their communities, such as participation in municipal budget discussions and playgrounds repairs (Maglajlic, 2010).

Our Child-Map Study design similarly cultivated children's sense of empowerment and aspirations to be included in decisions that affect their play spaces. In designing the project, we included children at every step in order to understand, preserve, and appreciate their spaces and voices. Furthermore, we also realized that research emerging directly from children's own

experiences has validity and contains rich knowledge that no adult, even the most skilled ethnographer, can produce. This position attends to what Hansen and Yukhananov (2006) refer to as a call for “children to be their own ethnographers” (cited in Johnson et al., 2012, p. 166). The many meanings that children attribute to their places also affirm our understanding of children as active social agents who often negotiate their places in an adult world. Children can be empowered if their place-making is supported by adults and institutions. In keeping with this ethos, in the next section, I provide an overview of the multiple steps of the Child-Map Study, woven through the literature review that influenced and impacted our research design. I also note the limitations of the current child-centric literature that inspired my research questions.

Speaking about the Planned Process of the Research

The role of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was crucial in designing the research process. The IRB’s recognition of children’s “special protection status” greatly complicated this research design, which involved direct contact with children.² While this restriction was a challenge, we tried to use it as an opportunity to include teachers and parents as mediators, which enriched our research process by providing a level of intimacy and trust with the children that might not have been possible if only researchers had been involved. After undergoing a rigorous review process and ultimately receiving clearance for collecting data, the study was approved by the Duquesne University IRB in January of 2014. The Waldorf School administration sent out a letter to around two hundred parents, inviting them to participate in the Child- Map Study.

Parents of thirty children, from Kindergarten through fourth grade, as well all the children in

² It is interesting to note that despite rich child-centric and participatory studies that aim for equal collaboration with participants, structural institutions (guardians of research participants) such as the IRB can be embedded in the discourse of “child protection,” paradoxically restricting the equal rights that institutions such as the UN wish to cultivate.

grades five through eight, participated in marking the map and providing qualitative narratives that afforded insight into their choices. Parents also consented for the school to archive their children's "ensemble of voices" (narrative drawing) into a book that will remain in their library for community access.

To account for individual variation, the Child-Map Study adopted multiple methods that not only provided children with different opportunities to express themselves, but also embraced that every child wishes to express themselves in their own unique way. When developing our method, we adopted practices that effectively elicited children's unique insights by empowering them as informants of their lives and fostering spaces where they could speak to us and, most importantly, we could listen. In keeping with this ethos, I now provide an overview of the multiple steps of the Child-Map Study.

Creation of the Child-Map. The practice of landscape design and planning often begins with a rectangular ordinance map. This mathematical, standardized representation of space is often constructed as an objective reality and becomes the primary representation of space. However, this quantitative product does not capture the embodied, lived experience of people who occupy that space. The representation of environmental information on a flat surface is also visually biased. Children do not usually accord primacy to visual experience, but instead are attuned to kinesthetic movement and other sensory domains (i.e., oral, tactile, olfactory, and auditory) (Olwig, 1990). Although planners prioritize the visual representation of space as measurable units of space, the child's orientation to a place has more to do with how much meaning they put into the place through their activities.

As part of our research design, our eighth-grade participants created a 4'x3' map of the grounds as part of their class activity, which was mounted and placed in the front hall of the

school. Map-making has been a popular tool among child-centric researchers, as it elicits information in a child-friendly way. Clark and Moss (2001) were pioneers in employing map-making along with photography and drawings, to form a mosaic of children's lived experience. These maps are intended to be personal rather than geographical recordings of the space. Research by Young and Barrett (2001) employed mental and depot mapping to capture a more complete understanding of the daily lives of Ugandan street children. The mental map required children to draw places they frequented, and the depot map showed where the children thought other street children visited. The map cultivated prompts eliciting information about the daily lives of street children and their spatial landscapes: where they slept, worked, or played. Williams, Jones, Fleuriot, and Wood (2005) worked with children between nine and ten years of age, using personalized maps called "memory maps" that evoked reminiscences and feelings significant to spaces. The memory maps conjured memories, including detailed features of the landscape invisible to the adults, and became significant in understanding safety and access of spaces for children in urban environments. In a study by Nespor (1997), children's personalized maps of their neighborhood became a powerful tool capturing their personal spatial histories, which were intertwined with socio-political histories of gender, economics, ethnicity, and class. In contrast to the personalized maps, Loebach and Gilliland (2010) employed a combination of methods such as a cartographic map of the neighborhood, a neighborhood walk, photography, and the use of GPS. The GPS-oriented mapping recorded the routes taken during the neighborhood walk and were later compared to the children's hand-drawn routes to test GPS accuracy and reliability for tracking individualized spatial movement. These methods became important in communicating children's desire for safety and security.

Jansson (2008) investigated children's perspectives on their neighborhood parks by

using local maps and photos. Pearce, Kirk, Cummins, Collins, Elliman, Connolly, and Law (2009) provided children a map of the local area but encouraged them to imprint their personal marks on the cartographic map with arrows and highlighters for important sites where they went to buy food and for all kinds of physical activities. Each prepared map became a personalized topographic landscape that captured children's understanding of the impact of the environment on their eating and physical mobility. Child-centric researchers have acknowledged the value of employing maps to understand the lived experience of children's places and have modified and individualized map-making techniques based on the needs of their research studies. However, most studies used cartographic maps provided by adults, and in those studies in which children drew their own personalized maps, they drew them with the researcher. Then such personalized maps became individualized and isolated units of analysis: researchers did not amalgamate or represent them as a gestalt map (with each individualized map forming a whole) that can facilitate dialogue among participants.

While these child-centric research studies were helpful in designing our own method, as researchers we also were aware that, historically and socially, the creation of maps has been the domain of adult planners. Maps historically were used by explorers and colonizers to invade spaces and territories—an imposition of their cartographic lens on the lived space of the inhabitants. José Rabasa (1985) critically understands Mercator's seventeenth-century atlas by emphasizing associations between the "reality" represented by Western world maps and a dominant Eurocentric structuring of geographic space, which "institute[s] a systematic forgetfulness of antecedent spatial configurations" (p. 6). Huggan (1989) identifies the production of a map as a critical practice in colonial discourse of conquering, controlling, and augmenting colonial authority. Map-making produces what Bhabha (1984) calls hybridization

that mimics or imitates the hegemonic (colonial) power. Such a hegemonic discourse, even in its attempt to recognize the “other,” produces subjects that have a semblance of the colonizers’ authority, but who will never be of the same status. The power keeps the difference alive by producing caricatures of the westernized singular self or caricatures of the indigenous self. The homogeneity of this representation system is also present in the map, in which the subjectively formulated reality of the world is passed on as “accurate and objective.” By providing children with adult-centric cartographic maps, like other child-centric researchers, we would have reasserted the very structure of colonization and disempowerment that we were wishing to erase. Thus, the re-reading and re-visiting of the map became an important counter practice in deconstructing the hegemonic discourse.

By asking children to create their own map of their spaces, we hoped to return power to them, thereby sharing the ownership and representation of their space. Contrary to colonial cartography, the Child-Map provided children with the opportunity to collectively join as cartographers of their own space and lived experience. The creation of the map by our child participants resulted in a dynamic map that gave the children a sense of ownership of the planning process. It opened up political dynamics of empowerment with which this dissertation will engage. Furthermore, unlike isolated personalized maps, the Child-Map became a public presence in the entry hall where all children, teachers, parents, and visitors could see it; the map became a visual representation of *the children’s* school grounds. The Child-Map was meant to be a public, interactive document that not only helped the Waldorf School to see which places on the grounds were meaningful to the children, but also created a dialogue among the children. It also became the medium where children could publicly document their likes and dislikes of specific outdoor places discovered in the child-led tours (see below) – and advocate for them. A

similar dialogue with the adult planning community was facilitated by mounting the Child-Map with the children's like and dislike pins next to the map created by adults in the *Goethean* adult workshop.

Child-led tours: Embedded walk. Parents from kindergarten to fourth grade were invited to ask their children to take them on a tour around the grounds and show them the places they liked and disliked. Parents received a packet that included the following guidelines for participation: *Please ask your child to take you on a tour of the Waldorf School grounds. While you and your child are out walking the grounds, wonder with him or her if there is a particular place that he or she likes. Ask about a favorite or special place. Once you arrive there, ask your child to tell you about the place. What does he/she do there? Does he or she do this alone or with friends? Is there a story about this particular place for your child? Also make observations about how your child is interacting with the place.* Children in grades five through eight took part in a tour of the grounds with their peers as a class activity³.

Several authors, such as Michel de Certeau (1984), Duerden (1978), Wallace (1993), Edensor (2000), Wylie (2005), and Ingold and Vergunst (2008) have written on the phenomenon of walking in anthropological research. However, in child-centric research, the formal terms “tour” or “transect walk” are used to describe the experience of walking with participants into their unidentified, mysterious, and unfamiliar world of community and neighborhood. Tours as a research method have their roots in International Development, where “transect walks” are used in participatory rural appraisal to enable non-literate communities to share their local knowledge (Hart, 1997). The method has been called various names: for instance, “sensory walks” by

³ A copy of the Child-Map instructions has been attached in Appendix A.

Breitbart (1995), or “go-along” by Kusenbach (2003).

Child-led tours or child-guided tours have been actively integrated in child-centric research methodology. During these tours, young children guide adults around a familiar environment while taking photographic and audio recordings of the process in kinesthetic ways. Influenced by this framework, Clark (2007) developed an innovative approach called *mosaic*, which involved recruiting young children as researchers to create a multifaceted mosaic of their lives using a number of tools, including child-led tours, map-making, and photography for gathering young children’s views and experiences of their everyday lives. Einarsdottir (2005) also incorporated a child tour in her study with children aged five to six years old, in which children took the researcher on a tour of their preschool while taking pictures with digital cameras. When left unsupervised, children tended to photograph what they wanted to; however, when there was a viewer, they photographed what they wanted the guest to view. Thus, this unsupervised condition diminished the power differential.

Several authors, such as Chawla (2002), Driskell (2002), Sutton and Kemp (2002), and Bryant (1985), have cited child-led tours as one of the most effective methods for exploring children’s environmental perception and use. Child-led tours have not only been significantly employed in re-designing playgrounds, but also to offer insight into children’s lived experience via “neighborhood walks,” thus stimulating advocacy and political change. Breitbart (1995) adopted the neighborhood walk method to understand the impact of infrastructure depletion by the city council and adults on the lives of youth in a low-income constituency. Teens described decaying park spaces, the presence of drug dealers, the absence of private spaces, broken basketball hoops, and the absence of drinking water in playgrounds as some of the structural conditions that affected their lives. They expressed their frustration and cited the lack of

opportunities as reasons why some youth became involved in gangs. In addition, Loebach and Gilliland (2010) conducted a pilot study using multiple methods such as neighborhood walks, photo-voice, and maps to provide a meaningful and complicated view of children's experience of valuable places in the community. Children conveyed safety as a dominant factor prohibiting their free engagement in exploring their neighborhood and voiced their desire to feel safe as a prerequisite to feeling included as equal citizens.

The child-led tours are compatible with phenomenological methodologies, which focus on investigating children's experiences. Indeed, child-led tours foster an expert lived account of the "everyday" world of the participant. As Van Manen (1990/2015) beautifully articulates, "The best way to enter a person's life world is to participate in it" (p. 69). To illustrate this intertwining between lived experience and lived body as rooted in places, I avoid using the distant and technical word *tour*, a word popular in child-centric research. A tourist in his or her *tour* gazes through the window at the foreign land with the hope of seizing the everyday, but he or she is prone to adopting an exoticizing and appropriating lens.⁴ In contrast, our Child-Map study introduced parents as guests into their children's life worlds. Including the parents facilitated an ease, intimacy, and dialogue that might not have been present if the children were asked to walk with a researcher. Thus, instead of adopting the term child-tour, I use the expression "embedded walk." The term "walk," a quintessential feature of our life, acknowledges the ordinary intimacy and relationality that parents and children lived through this land of the playground. Phenomenological work acknowledges the lived body as an important

⁴ For Edward Said (1978), "Orientalism" captures such an exoticizing and appropriating gaze, created through paintings and pictures of travelers claiming to portray real moments in Algerian women's daily routines. Malek Alloula's (1986) book *The Colonial Harem* also demonstrates these ideas.

element of place, as lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them. Simultaneously, places belong to lived bodies and likewise depend on them (Seamon, 2013). Embodiment *embeds* us into our environment. The word “embedded” is therefore a reminder of the deep entrenchment of our bodies, our experience, our memories, and ourselves in our places. Through the embedded walk, parents and children fostered a more *conscious, intentional and* attentive mode of walking, necessary in this research. In walking, the subjects move, but the embeddedness of our experience to places, things, and relationship meaningfully organizes these rapidly shifting perspectives into a significant whole. The embedded walk at the Waldorf School not only provided a bodily perspective and opened another portal to children’s expertise about their places, it also prevented the adults from forming a rigid view of children’s experiences from a fixed lens. The essence of such embedded research is to enter children’s worlds on their own terms.

Embedding voices. Parents were instructed to work collaboratively with their children in order to document the information from the embedded walk on a blank sheet of a paper provided by us. Parents and children were given the option of using drawings and/or written descriptions. The fifth through eighth graders were given similar instructions after completing their walk. Most of the children across all age groups chose to document their experiences using both drawings and written narratives.

The method of including drawings in our data was crafted in consideration with Hebdige’s observation that those who lack power in society may find other forms of self-expression beyond spoken words (in James et al., 1998). Researchers such as Tay-Lim & Lim (2013) emphasize that simply adding drawing does not accord power to children’s perspectives, as drawings traditionally have been employed to comment on children’s physical development or

to reductively evaluate children's psychological development. Thus, to honor children's perspectives is to give preference to what they draw and how they draw, and to privilege their own interpretation and meaning. Tay-Lim & Lim (2013) used the draw and talk method with four-year olds on issues of peer rejection. Through this approach, one of the participants in their study described the experience of being rejected by a peer with a powerful image of "a matter of heart" (p. 73). By drawing a small heart, the child depicted the hurt caused by her peer. This act of rejection moved in tandem with the resilient quality of their friendship, which the child represented effectively by drawing an arrow indicating their patched-up relationship. The drawing brings forth the individual narrative of the embodied hurt that the child experienced. Johnson, Pfister, & Vindrola-Padros (2012) used drawing with children diagnosed with cancer to highlight the power differential and lack of agency children felt during their treatment. For example, one of the participant's complained, "I didn't like asking the doctor questions. They don't talk, they yell. They say pass me this, pass me that, pass me that, and they get used to yelling. They yell when they talk and when I talk to them, they yell" (p. 168). One common theme across these studies was gaining a deeper understanding and value of children's lived worlds and elaborating power structures that remain opaque to the adults.

In our research design, we appreciated that children's drawings are not mere visual representations, but are integrated sensory experiences that bring taste, hearing, and touch into their depictions (Simms, 2008). Drawing as an embodied perspective gives primacy to the lived world, capturing the participant's sensory-perceptual experience. Drawings are meaningful embodied experiences where things, gestural bodies, and places change according to their significance for the child. The Child-Map Study is based on the premise that children's art becomes a medium for understanding their lived experience. Extending Merleau-Ponty's

(1945/1962) notion of language as rooted in a situation within an embodied perspective, drawing in research is not a mere extension of thought but an expressive act, which like speech opens undisclosed possibilities of the world.

In our Child-Map Study, children recorded their experiences of the embedded walk by incorporating both drawings and written text. Their documentations captured the footprints and traces of the children's walk with their parents and peers. These documents evoked the children's impressions, moods, and experiences of their places. I refer to these documents as "*ensemble voices*"— narrative drawings that represented what the children wanted to share with their parents, school authorities, and researchers. These "ensemble voices" echoed the multiple meaningful ways in which children spoke about their worlds.

Ms. Mahone and I presented a preliminary report of the children's ensemble voices to the members of the adult workshop, teachers, and other parents. Our findings were thematically arranged according to places the children identified. In including and valuing children's knowledge at the center of this study, we valued those voices that have been historically deemed as "less articulate" or "immature." These were lived voices that dethroned the very political instrument through which discourses are executed—the "exclusive right to speak and act" (Foucault, 1972), which historically has been the purview of science (academics or pediatricians) or adults. This preliminary report, integrating children's voices, became an important document to help the stakeholders, parents, and school community in planning interventions and modifying spaces for children, while also advocating for changes that reflected the children's aspirations for their places.

Marking my own spaces: Communal Child-Map Project. After completing and documenting their experiences of the embedded walk, parents and children were asked to mark

their favorite and least favorite places on the map created by the eighth graders with special pins, which were created by Ms. Mahone. Children in grades five through eight marked their places on the map as part of the class activity. The detailed color-coded pins for this project indicated liked (green beads) and disliked (red beads) places, as well as the child's grade level. Ms. Mahone was also a crucial coordinator of the parents', teachers', and children's activities, coordination that helped build the bridge between researchers and the school community. Inviting children to mark their meaningful places through the act of marking pins on the map signified a political change entitling children to designate their own territories. This practice of marking pins recognizes that the right to claim spaces and territories has historically been the role of colonizers as they invaded the space of the indigenous inhabitants. Re-thinking practices of claiming territories on maps also becomes relevant for challenging "toponymic silence" (Harley, 1988, p. 66).

Toponymic silences are created when colonizers employ specific techniques that make the territories of the native people invisible. One such technique is that of omission, when the mapmaker simply declines to include the indigenous world. The practice of removing native place names and replacing them with a European label is called "toponymic replacement." The practice of marking pins then can reclaim these territories that the oppressor deliberately erases and omits. I will explore the political transformation embedded in the act of marking pins in section – I of this dissertation.

Limitations of the Product-Oriented Child-Centric Research

In engaging with child-centric research for designing the Child-Map Study, I realized that despite a rich history of providing detailed descriptions of their diverse tools for pedagogical reasons, such as encouraging other scholars to adopt child-friendly methods, these methods primarily have been conceptualized as instruments or tools that fostered better data collection.

Prominent child-centric researchers such as Clark (2004, 2007, 2010); Brady (2004); Crivello, Camfield, and Woodhead (2009); Enright and Sullivan (2010); Fattore, Mason, and Watson (2007); Johnson, Pfister, and Padros (2012) have engaged in a series of articles praising the importance of using child-friendly methods for data collection and creating accessibility for children to actively and equally participate in research. While these methods have resulted in more precise and nuanced data collection, it is the results obtained through these tools that are considered to bring social change. Researchers have not paid explicit attention to the personal voices of transformation that the participants experience through the process of research, thereby maintaining the hegemonic structure of academia that defines meaningful forms of change. The same can be said for the two most popular methods— child-led tours and mapping— that have been impactful in bridging the gap between children’s need and social change by taking actions guided and suggested by children. However, the methods in themselves are not explicitly understood as resulting in emancipation or social justice. These transformative processes are recognized as part of child-centric research, but researchers have not given them the attention they deserve by talking about them in detail. Besides mentioning secondary gains experienced by the participants, such as increased confidence and better social interactions, researchers consider the data to be the guardian for social change. Such a focus on product reduces the tour and maps to a means to an end rather than honoring the process of transformation they foster.

We also can see a similar lack of attention to process in child-centric work with children’s places. While child-centric researchers such as Clark & Moss (2001; 2005), Janson (2008), Rasummen (2004) and Titman (1994) have worked extensively in collaborating with children in understanding children’s experiences of their playground, they had a) mostly organized children’s experiences on the basis of categories such as age and grades, b) presented a

uniform perspective of children's experiences, ignoring contradictions and differences that exist within the same age and grade categories, and c) organized their data based on dominant themes rather than including every child's voice. Such an organization misses the divergent and marginalized voices (commonly understood as an anomaly) that are also a significant part of the research process. Burman (2007) comments on developmental psychology's fascination with sameness, where difference is only accounted for in terms of pathology.

Thus, the current child-centric product-oriented focus: a) Has not explicitly attended to the process of data collection. By attending to this process, we can understand collaboration as not merely a tool to generate new descriptions pertaining to "projects"; in fact, it can serve as a conceptualization of social justice that is committed to bringing forth the empowering possibilities embedded in research. b) Has focused on *what* is being done in research rather than engaging with *how* research is done. This focus has missed the process of knowledge production that is critical in work with children who usually do not share the same power in research as adults and who negotiate power and difference differently than adults (Benson and Nagar, 2006). c) Has presented a uniform idea of what children need from places, which can increase the possibility of conceptualizing children's desire for place into singular and simplistic notions. A move from *what* is being done towards *how* it is being done can facilitate creation of new spaces and frameworks that can foster developing a multi-layered understanding of the contextually embedded processes and struggles of participants (both parents and children) involved in the politics of empowerment and resistance.

The theorizing ethos of research and empowerment in this framework is captured in what I call the *collaborative hospitality* i.e., research evolves unexpectedly in encounter with its participants, which unfold, give birth, transform, shift directions, and accord a new voice to the

work. The researcher trusts the process and is able to surrender her project to the participants to bring forth the transformation that they have experienced during and after the work, rather than wait for the researcher to highlight moments of transformation. The willingness to surrender is at the heart of this collaborative hospitality, which re-aligns relationship and accountability from simply recording narratives that can be reduced into data to creating dynamic spaces that challenged hegemonic models of knowledge construction (such as considering research writing or data analysis as the only important evidence of transformation that community undertakes). The goal is not finding power or giving voice (as it is recognized that participants already have a voice) but preserving dynamic new spaces for intellectual and political interventions. I decided to focus my own research on participants' experiences of child-centric research, thereby seeking to illuminate the transformative process that underlies practical outcomes.

Inception of the Current Study

Giving Voice to Parents' Experience

Being cognizant of the absence of a process-oriented focus in child-centric research, I became excited to explore and highlight the potentially transformative elements in this research. I was thrilled to let my dissertation be a project dedicated to doing *research on research*, and by providing a space that could be hospitable to subjective narratives of participants' experiences of doing the Child-Map Study with their children⁵. The Child-Map Study always included a plan to incorporate some form of narrative feedback about the research itself. Thus, even before formulating specific research questions for the dissertation, all parents were already asked to

⁵ I limited my interviews to parents, as the IRB restricted our contact with children.

indicate whether they would consent to an interview about the Child-Map Study research design and share their impression of the school grounds. Even though I was still struggling to “fine tune” and craft more precisely the way these parent interviews would inform my dissertation and the questions to which it sought to respond, my initial reflections about the lack of attention to process in child-centric research became essential to the eventual formulation of my interview questions. I thought of these interviews as offering an entry point into an exploration of the intimate, subjective accounts of the Child-Map study in the lives of parents. Through these interviews parents also narrated the stories of how their children were responding to the Child-Map Study. The initial goals for the interviews were a) to gather feedback about the Child-Map method as a way of engaging children in the planning of the green spaces they visit frequently, b) to unpack if participating in the Child-Map study changed parents’ relationships with the places on the school grounds and their children, and c) to get parents’ perspectives on participating in the Child-Map study with their children.

In the summer of 2014, I emailed twenty parents. Five mothers responded back agreeing to sit down and be interviewed⁶. The location of our meetings varied based on each mother’s preference. One occurred at a coffee shop, one was a home visit, one at an office, and two meeting at the Waldorf School’s library and school grounds⁷. I informed them that these

⁶ Even though unintended, only mothers accepted my invitation for the interview. While my work did not plan to embrace a gendered lens, to neglect its presence in the façade of a generic term “parents” would be a fallacy and an erasure. Thus, I will use the term “mother” or first names (pseudonyms) when discussing my data.

⁷ The location of the space was significant as it influenced the control, privacy, and comfort of the participants. In listening to the recorded interviews, I noticed that the interview at the coffee shop was formal and surface compared to interviews conducted in private settings and at the Waldorf School (that was an intimate space for parents). These familiar spaces allowed the parents to engage and explore deeply and intimately with their experience.

conversations could be recorded so that I could later transcribe and analyze them. I met only once with each mother for thirty to forty-five minutes. The primary reason they provided for participating in these interviews was that they wanted to do everything possible to include their children's voices and places in the study.

At the beginning of each session, I reviewed my consent form (Appendix B) with the mothers, after which we both signed it. An important issue of course pertains to anonymity, which we discussed; surprisingly, each mother with whom I spoke offered to let me use her real name. Their willingness notwithstanding, I have chosen to give all characters in the conversations pseudonyms, so as to protect the anonymity of those people who are implicated in the conversations. The five participants were given the pseudonyms of Allison, Macy, Liz, Annie, and Kathy, and the transcript with their labelled pseudonyms are attached as Appendix D. I chose these names from people I have encountered in my life, based on the qualities they had that were similar to qualities that stood out for me in my interactions with each participant. Allison was a 35-year-old sensitive and empathic white woman. She had two children, a 7-year-old daughter who studied at Waldorf school and a 2-year-old daughter. Macy was a 42-year-old insightful and motivated white woman. She had two children, a 4-year-old son who studied at Waldorf school and a 22 months old daughter who I had the luxury to watch play as I interviewed Macy. Liz was a 40-year-old passionate and warm white woman. She was mother of a 5-year-old daughter who studied at Waldorf School and two teenage sons. Annie was a 36-year-old kind and warm white woman. She had three children, one daughter aged 9 and twin sons aged 5 who studied at the Waldorf school. Kathy was a 36-year-old reflective and playful Hispanic woman. She had a 7-year-old son who studied at Waldorf school. The conversations with each of them were semi-structured insofar as each conversation began with a set of

preselected areas that I explored with the participants. The format of the actual conversations, however, varied considerably from one participant to the next, depending on which areas each chose to emphasize. In this way, our conversations were formal enough to provide some basis for comparison. At the same time, they were flexible enough to allow for deviation into unexpected and unscripted aspects of the experience and the children's world. My questions are listed in Appendix C of this dissertation. I also gave the participants plenty of opportunity to address any other significant issues they felt demanded notice but which we had not touched upon during our conversations.

Thus, the primary data for this study include:

1. Ensemble voices: narrative drawings created by children from kindergarten to fourth grade, with help from their parents.
2. Ensemble voices: narrative drawings created by children from the fifth through eighth-grade with their peers.
3. Interviews with five mothers.

Beyond this data collection, the dissertation also focuses on the invisible, absent, or "otherwise" aspects of the research, that is, those that were not planned, empirically available to observation, or otherwise "present", but which nonetheless emerged or impacted the research process. I elaborate upon these invisible aspects of the research, such as the children adopting the research design and process for their own political needs and agendas, in the discussion section (On Hearing Accidental Voices) of this dissertation.

Research Questions: Listening to the Invisible Voices in the Child-Map Study

I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices, as if it had signaled to me by pausing, for an instant, in suspense. Thus there would be no beginning, and instead of being the one from whom discourse proceeded, I should be at the mercy of its chance unfolding, a slender gap, the point of its possible disappearance.
(Foucault, 1970/1981, p. 57)

In his lecture, “The Order of Discourse,” Foucault (1970/ 1981) struggles with the obligation to begin something new, fears being silenced, and the recognition of a voice that is always haunting the discourse (data)— a voice that is always speaking, and that interrupts his “own” speech. For Foucault, he is not the discoverer or originator of this voice, but he is being interrupted (disrupted) by its presence. I felt a similar interruption as I interviewed the five mothers and glanced through the ensemble voices (narrative drawing) made by the children. I realized that the preliminary inquiry into the likes and dislikes of children’s places and engagement of children and parents in the school’s renovation process was itself grounded in an ethics of political empowerment. However, these rich stories carried descriptions of transformation that went beyond our explicit aim to understand children’s places. I realized that the participants took things from the research that were significant for them, rather than waiting for the outside researcher (me) to inform significance through reports and presentation (data analysis). Such polymorphous responses were also present in the ensemble voices (narrative drawings) in response to the question, “What are the places you liked and disliked?” I noticed that children’s experiences of the place could not be simply captured in a uniform thematic structure, and even when children belonged to the same age and grade, each of their voices offered a unique lens. Like Foucault (1970/1981), I realized that I was not the discoverer or

originator of the research questions, but that “*a nameless voice was already speaking long before me*” (p. 57). By breaking the traditional structure of doing research in which a researcher enters with a set of questions for data collection, my dissertation questions emerged from the research *process* itself. I recognized that multiple aspects of transformation were part of this research process, and that the most important product for my collaborators was not my thesis (or data analysis), but the movement of transformation that they all experienced in their own unique way. Extending this collaborative hospitality that formed the foundation of the Child-Map Study, my dissertation research questions were born from these early interactions with the participants.

In my effort to hear a multiplicity of voices, I have refrained from posing a single question for this dissertation. Instead, here I present my research questions as thematic *queries* based on the *key episodes* that emerged as political events in the Child-Map Study and the follow up interviews. Even though each query is unique, they form the unifying thread of thinking and re-thinking each part of the Child-Map Study with respect to children’s research, politics, voices, and space.

Query I: Exploring the Play Spaces as a Political Ground

The first query explores the spatiality of the playspaces and the political dynamics of space in the lives of children. This query engages with children’s responses (narrative drawings) to the question asked during the Child-Map Study, “What are the places you liked and disliked?” By staying close to the data, the purpose is to learn the diverse needs different places at the Waldorf ground serve for children, and to understand the meaning of their places through the children’s experience. In its deconstructive commitment, this query unpacks how children find a place in an adult-centric world and seeks to understand how their place-making is impacted by the presence of adult and adult centric structures. This query wishes to illuminate found places,

lost places, marginalized places, and divided places that exist on the Waldorf school grounds.

The effort is to capture an *ensemble of voices*, forming a multiplicity and complexity of bringing converging, diverging, and conflicting voices that coincided in the Waldorf playground. While presenting such an ensemble, it is my effort to pay attention to every single voice or theme to honor each child's unique perspective. The aim of such care to every voice is to resist creating a politics where only the most active and dominating voices find a space. It is my hope that this co-existence of "difference," "singularity," and "sameness" in the same platform resists totalization of "the other" in simple categories of exclusion and inclusion, thereby keeping the margins dynamic and resisting assimilation into a hegemonic center.

Query II: Exploring Transformative Aspects of the Research Process

The purpose of this query is to explore the processes that the two core-practices, "Embedded Walk" and "Communal Child-Map Project," of the Child-Map study introduced into the lifeworld of parents and children. The focus is on bringing forth how these practices privileged parents' and children's experiences, allowing children to speak, and parents to listen differently. As the researcher, instead of being an authoritative outsider who declares the impact and benefit of the research method, I explore subjective meaningful stories from the field to illuminate how the process of research (data collection) was transformative for the parents and children in the Child-Map Study. I move away from the product (data collection and data results) oriented research, and bring forth the transformation embedded in the act of doing research itself. I focus on practices, as it is through networks of practices, rituals, institutions, and technologies that power is circulated and localized; what Foucault calls "meticulous rituals" or "the micro-physics of power" (Hall, 1997, p. 50). If practices are one of the modes through which power is circulated, re-thinking and re-living practices become important counter practices in re-

constructing and shifting power.

However, the adherence to mere practices runs the risk of turning methods into technification where power can become like a commodity that can be acquired, exchanged, shared, and transmitted by pre-determined techniques at will. Thus, my goal is to adopt a deconstructive critical stance towards the two practices (embedded walk and Communal Child-Map Project) to unpack how even practices that are empowering can create disempowering and unequal structures in hearing participants' voices. Furthermore, deconstruction uncovers the social and political structure that impacts parent and child interactions.

Final Reflections: Hearing Accidental Voices

As the data collection for the Child-Map Study was in progress, it came to our attention that the seventh and eighth graders had found a unique way to protect the yellow shed, their beloved place, located at the corner of the playground. As the seventh and the eighth graders noticed that younger children had marked "yellow hut" as a disliked place, they responded strongly with their own perspective, organizing a movement to put all their pins on the yellow hut to save their place. They used the ensemble voice as a political platform to express the emotional significance of the yellow shed to them and to argue that it should be preserved in its present state. This unexpected voice entering the research was a political interruption that we had not imagined for our work. With this creative resistance, children reintroduced us to our own research, complicating who is the agent of the study and who is empowering whom. This was the rich imprint that children made: illuminating that research is empowering only when it moves away from the researchers' set patterns and the participants make it their own.

This incident encapsulates the spirit of this dissertation, one that has aspired to honor the polymorphous and complex voices of participants' empowerment. Taking this moment as the

inspiration, in the final section I employ Derrida's (2000) notion of hospitality (the guest and the host), complicating commonplace methods of distinguishing between the guest (participant) and the host (researcher). I resist the temptation to provide a grand finale (discussion) that ends with technocratic and simplified theories and steps to achieve children's empowerment. Instead, I end with the personal signature that children marked on the Child-Map Study.

Chapter 2: Love Letter of Academia: Research Methodology and Questions

The paper curled as Mr. Kapasi wrote his address in clear, careful letters. She would write to him, asking about his days interpreting at the doctor's office, and he would respond eloquently, choosing only the most entertaining anecdotes, ones that would make her laugh out loud as she read them in her house in New Jersey [...] He dreaded the possibility of a lost letter, the photograph never reaching him, hovering somewhere in Orissa, close but ultimately unattainable.

—Jhumpa Lahiri
Interpreter of Maladies (2000, p. 55)

“Interpreter of Maladies,” a short story by the acclaimed author Jhumpa Lahiri, captures the budding intimate relationship between Mr. Kapasi, a tour guide who also works as an interpreter in a doctor's office, and Mrs. Das, an Indian-American woman and tourist who is visiting *Konark*, India. Mr. Kapasi desires to write her letters of “entertaining anecdotes” from his doctor's office that would blossom into a love affair, a continuation of the respect and interest Mrs. Das has shown him on the trip. Mr. Kapasi yearns to write extraordinary accounts of patients' maladies; he fantasizes telling of exceptional disorders, the cure to which puzzles even the best of doctors; tales that would charm Mrs. Das with the adventures he undertakes at the doctor's office. Research and research writing are analogous to these love letters that Mr. Kapasi aspires to write, either full of heroic adventures of the research and the participants (the success we achieve in the field) or even presenting the mundane with a touch of the exceptional. Much like an ideal love story, the researcher enters the beloved field, enchants the participants with eloquent questions, and is captivated by their responses. Together they address issues of social justice, and the community or academia lives happily after.

Dissertations and love affairs promise a straight line: a beginning, a middle, and an end. Writing a dissertation can compartmentalize and force a linearity that often does not exist during and after the research process. Our dissertations seem to flow organically from the literature

review (past failed love affairs), data collection (how we met), method (how we understood each other), analysis (interpreting and unpacking the hidden meanings of your lover's words), discussion, and even future implications of our work. St. Pierre (1997) calls it "a carefully staged academic fictio, a construction approved by the authorities, a rite of passage into citationality, a normalizing function of the gaze of the institution" (p.182). However, such a linearity seldom actually exists in the process of writing our work, or in our relationships. There are always transgressions: questions change as we revisit, the literature review follows the discussion, and even when we code our data and try to sort them into categories, we are always haunted by data that does not support the knowledge, or singular voices that are important but cannot be sorted into any themes. Such a careful organization of data into neat categories, sections, and headings also does not account for the analysis that happens during the writing process. As I wrote something, typing and making sense, a wonderment came to my analysis as thought happened in writing. I was startled by the new ways in which data is collected again and again during the writing and analysis process itself, rather than remaining separate, confined, or caged in all the ways dissertations are often wont to do. Writing is thinking, and thoughts happened as I stared at words, wrote ideas and was reintroduced again to my data. Both happen at once. As data are collected in the writing, the researcher thinks/writes (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). Such a thinking in writing breaks the distinction between data collection and data analysis—one more assault to the structure.

Moreover, these carefully crafted romantic stories seldom exist on the ground. In working closely with children on numerous participatory and community projects, I have come closer to understanding research as a messy business (Parr, 1996). Research participants, including children, rarely act in planned ways, often clicking pictures that I feel have nothing to do with

our work, drawing in ways that I don't want them to, giving answers to a query that does not match my interest or idea of a right answer, being disinterested in my project, challenging my power, and making me witness my desire for control.

In revisiting the anecdote from “Interpreter of Maladies,” Mr. Kapasi reminds us that writing a love letter always embodies the possibility of the lost letter, that which is addressed to the lover but might never be received: “hovering somewhere in Orissa, close but ultimately unattainable” (Lahiri, 2000, p. 55). In the possibility of a lost letter also lays the possibility of it reaching to the audience in unintended ways, or touching a reader whom the writer never intended or imagined writing to (or for, or with). The lost letter is always written from the memories of the past, in the present, hosting the possibility of a future. Research is always haunted by the memories and traces of a lost letter (messiness) which remains the essence of the love affair but whose presence is always obliterated or rests in the margins. In writing/offering my work, I want to be sensitive to, and honor such lost letters, such “messy texts” (Marcus, 1994), and those haunting, hidden presences that are hard and even impossible to present in a straight clean line, but that nonetheless demand “a reading that is responsible to the text” (Spivak, 1994, p. 27). St. Pierre (1997) writes about futile linear attempts of the dissertation: “This project has transgressed its legitimate bounds into the realm of the unnamed, and the requirement of this format to represent a clear, linear process of research which can be judged as worthy becomes violent, coercive, and distortive” (p. 180). Such a transgression was always part of the Child-Map Study itself⁸, where the data was collected prior to the formulation of

⁸ However, the preliminary inquiry into the likes and dislikes of children poses a question and ethos to engage children as equal stakeholder in the school’s renovation that continue to be the very foundation on which this dissertation implicitly and explicitly rests.

dissertation questions or the method of analysis. As the time to write the dissertation came, the questions for the project reformulated, the literature review shifted, and the method of analysis did not easily fit into the data that was collected. In writing the dissertation, I felt that my biggest challenge was to adhere to the traditional structures by which dissertations are written. I realized each data *point*, and each question required a unique address, and a transgression of *the method*. Much like the lost letter, my data and my project called me to speak and write differently. Such an evocation from the data is a desire to speak to it on its own terms. Thus, instead of forcing a violent structure onto my work, I have aspired to listen to its organicity, letting the process follow its own course without attempting to control it. Instead of taking an objective and hegemonic stance that dominates, separates, and controls, I have attempted to maintain a subjective, marginalized position that holds, allows, and receives (Shields, 1998).

Convergence of Difference: Meeting of Phenomenology and Deconstruction

In honor of such a responsibility to the text, I now present my method of analysis. The first method of data analysis is the love letter; the method of phenomenology that encapsulates the lived personal voices of human experience. Phenomenology, with its fidelity to detailed descriptions, trusts phenomena as they are lived and expressed by the participants (the lover) as an authentic voice. It is the “naïve” description of the mundane life that allows phenomena or experiences to show themselves. As the lover in the love letter remembers all togetherness, even (perhaps even especially) the seemingly ordinary and banal times, phenomenology captures the exceptionality in what is considered to be mundane. The “naïve” descriptions of phenomenology are sensory and embodied love letters of academia. As one reads the love letter, the smell, the touch, and the presence of the lover is received. The lover is not now distant, as the letter captures the being of the lover; he or she is in the letter in the experience of writing. On the other

hand, the lost letter is the method of deconstruction that notices what is being silenced, whispered, and deformed behind the audible voices. To present the lost letter, I do not strive to close the gap of disorder, but I write in a way to bring this messiness to the forefront. To bring forth this messiness of data, I selectively employ deconstruction to attend to the discourse of power, to complicate the authorship of the researcher, to observe counter-arguments and binary oppositions, and to notice liberating practices that are counter-intuitive to the discourse of empowerment. Thus, while phenomenology unpacks the story of the political, deconstruction urges us to take a detour from the omniscient position to ask who is worthy to tell the story, and whose stories are considered to be worthy of listening and hearing. Moreover, for both phenomenology and deconstruction, writing is our method. Thus, after presenting my two methods, I also present the two ways in which I am writing this dissertation politically.

I employ two distinct methodologies, Van Manen's (1990) phenomenological method and Burman and MacLure's (2005) method of deconstruction. Although phenomenological psychologists can and do attend to power and politics as lived, phenomenological philosophy has been charged with adopting a somewhat naïve and arguably conservative position with regard to politics (Langdrige, 2008). In contrast, Derrida is concerned with power—its effects, its use, and abuse. He is interested in what he calls *pouvoir-écrire*, the power of writing, writing power, the discourse of power and the power of discourse, its capacity to exclude, to declare abnormal, to repress, to standardize, to devalorize and degrade (Caputo, 1988, p. 193). However, before I lay out my method of analysis, it is important to address that Derrida's project was directed against the critique of metaphysics of presence and he was an outspoken critic of the hermeneutics of trust, the phenomenological project of Husserl and Heidegger, which tends to close meaning and reduce it to a reductive and final interpretation. While the purpose of

hermeneutics is to return to the originary or to the hidden truth, to crack and decipher the truth, Derrida denies the originary and calls it a linguistic and grammatical deception.⁹ Suspicious of terms like meaning, truth, and the originary, Derrida questioned the binary oppositions of “truth/error; reality/representation; cause/effect; thought/language; essence/appearance; man/woman; presence/absence; nature/culture; mind/body; reason/emotion; universal/particular, world/text, original/copy” (MacLure, 2005, p.284) in Western Philosophy, where the former term is considered to be superior over the latter.

Despite Derrida’s long-standing critique of the phenomenological project¹⁰,

⁹ In a more empathic and collaborative stance, Caputo (1988) reminds us that Derrida’s work is an effort to set his work free by writing with “Heidegger against Heidegger” (p. 154). The limitation of the metaphysics of presence is a Heideggerian project and thus Derrida only writes in continuation and extension of Heidegger rather than against him. Caputo finds the desire for a dialogue with the two philosophers in his radical hermeneutics. He claims, “I want now [...] to set the set the text of Derrida over the text of Heidegger, letting each get entangled in the other—Heidegger in Derrida and Derrida in Heidegger—so that their texts interweave, each intertwined with the other, each showing signs of the other’s interventions” (1988, p.154). His intervention lets “Derrida whisper in Heidegger’s ear and then switches their roles and put Derrida in the writer’s chair, letting Heidegger whisper [in Derrida’s ear]” (Caputo, 1988, p.275)

¹⁰ In revisiting Derrida’s criticism of Heidegger, Caputo (1988) explains that Heidegger does not intend to complete the onto-hermeneutical task of discovering and disclosing the “true” meaning of being (inherent essence) that has been previously unknown. Caputo (1988) says that Heidegger’s use of the term meaning is a “kind of meta-meaning which sets up meaning (a quo) in the straightforward sense” (p.174). For Caputo, Derrida neglects that Heidegger is interested in “how metaphysical theories take shape and are organized [...]in virtue of time determination where the now is privileged” (p.175). From this point of view, inauthentic and authentic are two divergent ways Dasein temporalizes itself. In addition, Caputo argues that *aletheia* needs to be translated as a process through which things appear into presence, not equated with truth as Derrida does. Thus, we see the meeting of Derrida and Heidegger: *aletheia* resists the notion of a hidden secret (onto-hermeneutic) and puts our waiting for a hidden master key under-erasure. In re-reading, Caputo reveals a Heidegger that is not thinking of the content of the message. Hermes delivers (that which Derrida heavily questions) but rather of the message (meaning) making process. This is what Caputo contends that Derrida misses, but only becomes possible because of the deconstructive reading of Heidegger that Derrida himself provides. Phenomenological hermeneutics pays attention not just to the message but also to its medium (context). Given this inter-dependence of messaging, neither is privileged over the other.

phenomenological inquiry, especially in the work of Van Manen, has been inclusive of the postmodern and deconstructive turn, specifically by being suspicious of the idea that language is *innocent*. Van Manen (1990) does not see essence as a residue of core meaning, but as “a linguistic construction, a description of phenomena” (p. 39). Van Manen is not interested in binary opposition such as essence versus representation, truth versus error, or hidden versus truth, but instead asks how a phenomenon is experienced and lived by the individual. Such a contextuality and trust to the phenomena also rested in the work of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1945/1968) (whom Derrida largely ignores), who assured us that listening to divergent voices of lived experiences has the capacity to encompass contradictory and converging experiences or binary opposition beloved by deconstruction. Phenomenology would argue that the experience in the description of lived experience would always embody the structures that deconstruction wishes to unpack. Derrida’s distrust of the singularity and fixedness of meaning can also be found in Merleau-Ponty’s (1945/1968) intentional arc. The openness of the arc generates the possibility of multiple meanings or, as Merleau-Ponty would say, indeterminate meanings. He affirms that “ambiguity is of the essence of human existence and everything we live or think has always several meanings” (p. 169). Derrida distrusts the possibility of deterministic meaning resting in a phenomenon. The hermeneutic circle after Gadamer (1975/2004) is not a deconstruction of the assumptions of our own understandings, but the frailty or impossibility of a complete understanding. Thus, the hermeneutic circle, integral to Van Manen’s (1990) method, returns to the surprising, contradictory nature of the phenomena, but the circle (much like the arc) is a return to the determinist possibilities of the experience.

To choose either phenomenological analysis or deconstruction over the other would erase the gifts that rest in the humbleness of their meeting: phenomenology’s gift of the creation of

spaces to hear political voices; and deconstruction's gift of introspecting empowering practices and political voices that can become dangerous. Caputo (1988) encourages us that the meeting of two divergent traditions requires humility:

It comes away chastened from its struggle with flux [...] It understands the power of the flux to wash away the best-laid schemas of metaphysics. It takes the constructs of metaphysics to be temporary cloud formation which, from a distance, create the appearance of shape and substance but which pass through our fingers upon contact. (p. 258)

Such a humility rests in phenomenology, which awaits the disclosure of the phenomena as a gift, and in deconstruction that provides us courage to look critically at our own practices.

Love Letter: Phenomenological Method

The political dimensions of each aspect of the Child-Map Study are implicit in the experiential accounts of the children and parent participants. For Van Manen (1990), phenomena disclose themselves in episodes and experiences. In the Child- Map Study, multiple components intersected to form an essential structure of phenomenological child-centric research design, through the study of children's experience of a place. The Child-Map project became an event in the political field of the school that raised questions about children's world, spaces, and empowerment. Phenomenology becomes essential as a method to understand politics and empowerment because it considers research as a caring act.

Philosophically and methodologically, the project from its very beginning desired¹¹ to be rooted in phenomenology. Most research in the existential-phenomenological tradition has as its

¹¹ However, the desire of the data puts this desire under erasure.

ultimate goal revealing the essential structure of a particular lived-experience. My participants were not, however, asked to respond to a single question or to describe a single experience. This multiplicity and complexity of the questions required a method that does not follow strict standardized or technocratic rules, but that can allow invention or disorder as a response to let the data speak to us. I adopted Van Manen's method for its ethos of rejecting any method that becomes prescriptive, thinking instead of methodology as directions, guidance, themes, and features rooted in human science traditions. Van Manen identified six activities: "turning to the phenomenon which interests us; investigating experience as we live it; reflecting on the essential¹² themes; describing the phenomenon through writing and re-writing; maintaining a strong pedagogical relation; [and] considering parts and wholes" (1990, pp. 30-31). These six processes provide us with a methodological structure that promotes freedom and dynamism necessary to the process of hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry.

Van Manen (1990) eloquently evokes phenomenological inquiry "as an artistic endeavor, a creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life in a linguistic description that is both holistic and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and sensitive" (p. 39). In considering the artistic endeavor embedded in phenomenology, one is not surprised that phenomenological thinkers have engaged with works of paintings—Heidegger (1963) and Merleau-Ponty (1973) with Van Gogh, Merleau-Ponty (1948/2004) with Cezanne, and Simms (2008) with medieval and pre-renaissance artists to comment on children's drawings and their lived world.

¹² The word "essential" continues to carry the residues of fundamental essences (presence) that Derrida criticizes and from which Van-Manen is trying to move away.

Analyzing Child-Map data and interviews via Van Manen's and Simms's method.

Given the varied nature of the Child-Map Study data, I employed Van Manen's (1990) method because it appreciates both written descriptions and visual artistic media. My verbal data included both the mothers' interviews and the text inscribed by children on the ensemble voice,¹³ and my visual data came from the drawings that children made. Even though Van Manen's method acknowledges the inclusion of visual artistic media, he does not provide specific steps to analyze drawings or paintings. Thus, to complement his method, I adopted Simms's phenomenological method to analyze children's drawings. I now lay down the steps I undertook to analyze my verbal data, followed by a presentation of steps I undertook to analyze drawings by adopting Simms's phenomenological method.

Applying Van Manen's method to mothers' interviews. Once I conducted and transcribed the interviews with the help of a transcriber, my reflection on the data began. I adopted the three steps to analyze themes suggested by Van Manen (1990) to explore my verbal data. For Van Manen, themes are not objects or generalizations, but metaphors, "knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes" (p. 90).

The first step, called the wholistic or sentient approach. In this step, I attempted to gain a basic, overall feel for the text and the experiences of the participants. In my first reading of the transcripts, I tried to read reflectively with an awareness to forming a holistic relationship to and curiosity about the text without attempting to make detailed notes. In my second read-through, I attended to the interviews as a whole, noticing phrases or episodes that seized upon the

¹³ In the ensemble voices, the data included the text, text that complemented the drawing, and drawings.

seemingly vital meaning or essence of the text.

The second phase, called the selective or highlighting approach. In this step, and with the aid of the qualitative data software, NVivo, I read through the interview again, coding statements, phrases, and examples that seemed critical. At this phase, I began noticing and delineating main themes that appeared to run across the interviews. At this point, my measure for what qualified as “significant” was very broad. Essentially, any statement that appeared to me to resonate with my participants’ emotional or psychological experience was included.

The third step, called the detailed reading or line by line approach. I looked at every line and coded sentences with the aid of NVivo, and that allowed sentences to be clustered and re-clustered based on different and inter-related themes.

Attentiveness to words and anecdotes. Since Van Manen’s method requires attentiveness to anecdotes as critical in understanding a phenomenon, I paid specific consideration to episodes or anecdotes that significantly captured the essence of my participants psychological experiences. I also listened to the etymological sense of the word. For Van Manen (1990), paying attention to etymological origins and colloquialisms may bring us in close contact with the spirit of an experience. This process involved inviting the etymological meaning of the word and idiomatic phrases that have lost some of their essence in everyday usage to invoke traces of the lived experience. The power of phenomenological texts lies precisely in this resonance that the word can affect our understanding, including those reaches of understanding that are somehow pre-discursive and pre-cognitive and thus less accessible to conceptual and intellectual thought. The creative, contingent positioning of words may give rise to evocative images that can move us: inform and thus leave an effect on us. Furthermore, I also paid attention to the elements of corporality (lived body), the structure and essence of spaces (lived space), temporal rhythms

present in the themes (lived time), and the intersubjective dimension (relationality) embedded in my data. These existential themes, fundamental to the universal theme of life, are always present, but different ones dominated in different situations.

For my various themes, I chose direct quotations from my participants that captured the essence of each theme. Once the themes emerged, meanings were restated more or less in the participants' language. I also unpacked the meaning and essence of themes in a more psychological language, invoking them to answer questions about children's politics and empowerment.

Analysis of verbal text on the ensemble voice via Van Manen's method. As mentioned before, a preliminary report with thematically arranged children's places was presented at the Goethean adult workshop. This preliminary report formed an initial verbal transcript for the children's ensemble voices. Analogous to my approach to the mothers' interviews, I followed Van Manen's three steps to analyze the text present in the ensemble voices. In my reading of the transcripts, I drew out all the sentences and phrases that seemed to reflect children's experiences of their places. After delineating the main themes, I identified the sub-themes. In some cases, the sub-themes overlapped with other main themes, and I used my best judgment to arrange my data. This inter-relatedness of themes spoke to the interwoven nature of our lived experience that resists being fixed in categories.

Amalgamation and analysis of the drawings. I adopted the phenomenological stance proposed by Simms (2008) to understand children's drawings. Re-articulating Merleau-Ponty, Simms says, "The child's drawing is not a copy of a visual reality but an expressive act, which attempts to catch the visual as well as the affective experience of an event" (p. 68). In comparing children's drawing with pre-renaissance paintings, Simms explains that the anatomical and

spatial structures of the figures and places are not based on anatomical or spatial correctness, but are oriented towards meanings. Simms (2008) says, “Children feel perfectly free to ignore or even distort the geometrical extension in order to represent the meaning the space has for them” (p. 60).

Thus, moving away from the geometrical representation or objective truth, I began my analysis focusing on the fabric of significance and meaning that objects and places had for children. To aid in efficiently identifying relevant elements in individual drawings and in identifying common and divergent themes across drawings, I made notes with an eye toward making sense of specific structural details. The first structural detail I considered was the size and shape of the body and its interaction with things: for example, the size of the play structures in relation to the size of the child’s body. Secondly, I also noticed the spatial organization of things--which objects dominated the drawings, their size in proportion to other objects, and interaction of things and activities. Simms (2008) articulates that for the child, “the world of things is a world of gestures that extend an invitation to the human body” (p. 67). Thus, I paid special attention to the ways in which body and things amalgamated into gestures and activities.

In noticing these details, Simms urges us to listen to the story that these images are narrating. Sometimes, hearing these stories was easier, as drawings were supplemented by text (or monosyllables) that bring forth the meaning of the drawings; at other times, a careful attention to the mood, content, and action was needed. To aid in efficiently identifying relevant elements, I analyzed drawings with an eye toward making sense of specific structural details, or the global gestalt in light of children’s experience to gain a sense of the whole, noting the mood, content, and action. This is also known as the pathic relationship—the general mood, sensibility, sensuality, and felt sense of being. This synthesis did not attempt to define the essential structure

of a discrete experience; rather, it was meant to be a narrative of the child's experience, while unfolding themes and meanings present in the data. (Re) turning again and again to the data, I listened to both the cognitive meanings and non-cognitive meanings of the text, such as the evocative, the expressive, the transcendent, and the poetic elements that enriched my understanding of the everyday life of children's play spaces.

After the analysis of the verbal text and drawings, I delineated main themes and attended to ways in which the drawings and the verbal text related thematically to one another. Not all drawings and verbal text fit neatly into the grand themes I extrapolated, but such decisions about inclusion and exclusion of children's voices into categories felt violent, and thus I have included all the ensemble voices (narrative drawings) in Appendix E of this dissertation as a means of honoring each child's voice.

Lost Letter: Deconstructing the Love Letter

In my engagement with the phenomenological method, I encountered that even when my data could be organized into themes, there were inherent contradictions, counter-arguments, or singular voices that resisted the thematic structure. Such a structure or thematization would have been violent to the very work that I aspired to do: it would have erased the multitude of voice, the difference, and the very essence of the political. The transgression in my data, while creating a "mess," also resisted empowerment to be understood as a step-by-step ready-made formula that can be reduced to dangerous technocratic practices. For Spivak (1990) this disruption is the ground for deconstruction to "say yes to that which interrupts [our] project" (cited in Pierre, 1997, p. 178). These categories, Foucault (1977) elaborates, "suppress the anarchy of difference, divide differences into zones, delimit their rights, and prescribe their task of specification" (p. 186). It was only when I struggled to organize my work into practices and categorical grids that I

experimented and experienced digression, what Spivak (1993) calls “moments of bafflement” (p. 248). I had to adopt a different sense-making and strategy that not only does justice to my work, but also “might elude humanism’s attempts to order what can never be contained” (Pierre, 1997, p. 178). Consequently, I adopted the lens of deconstruction to listen to the voices in my data that haunted silences and desired to be included.

It is difficult to define Deconstruction, as any definition rests in the realm of words, meanings, and pre-suppositions: the very concepts deconstruction puts under erasure. MacLure (2005) defines deconstruction “as the act of bringing pressure to bear on the cherished oppositions that are woven into texts, forcing/allowing them to reveal their blind spots or ****aporias**** – that is to say points of impasse – where the integrity of the oppositions is fatally compromised, and an excess of disorderly and contradictory meanings and resonances is released” (p. 34). Derrida (2003) recognizes this inconsistency in his own writing as well when he says, “if there are contradictions or aporias in my own text, it is because I am saying things which are self-contradicting or aporetic; so, I point to them and I try to formalize the aporia or the self-contradiction in order not to be inconsistent” (p. 25). Instead of finding an *essence* or *presence*, the work of deconstruction is *différance*, meaning to trace both difference and deferral (MacLure, 2005). Bringing that which has been silenced, unthought or untruthed into presence is an ethical stance of responsibility to the other. However, in bringing to presence what has been silenced, our effort is not complete mastery; rather, we can continually try to glimpse the “trace” of what has been silenced.

It is important to recognize that deconstruction as a method of analysis would not be accepted by Derrida, as to call it a method would be to adhere to the very metaphysical binary and opposition that Derrida opposes, where the external world and deconstruction are considered

to be separate (MacLure, 2005). For Derrida (1992), deconstruction is always intricately tied to the object. To think of it as a method is to bring it into the realm of procedures and presence that would create the assurance of spotting the truth. It is with recognition of this complexity embedded in the method that MacLure and Burman (2005) suggest striking through “~~method~~” when talking about deconstruction, to bring forth that deconstruction as a method always puts method under erasure. Derrida (1992) is not interested in practices as much as reminding us that every discourse represses, excludes, refutes, and is capable of being corrected, especially those which claim to be authoritative. Instead of confronting us with the problem of deciding what to choose or laying criteria for decidability, he offers the presence of exclusion in all decisions.

Employing Burman and MacLure’s method. For my detour into the data, I adopted Burman and MacLure’s method not only for giving me the safety of a framework to enter the haunting messiness that deconstruction can evoke, but also for their (especially Burman’s) embeddedness in and sensitivity to childhood research. In their article, deconstruction ~~as a method of research~~, Burman and MacLure (2005) provide numerous examples to offer paths for questions and reflections, much like Van Manen’s method (1990), presenting directions on how deconstructions can be applied to one’s study without reducing it to a step-by-step procedure. For Derrida (1992), deconstruction (differance) is already at work in the text; we do not “apply” or “do” deconstruction – the text deconstructs itself. At best what we do is to say yes to that deconstruction to be, to show itself. These steps seem to create linearity, but often they happened organically and simultaneously. They are what Burman and MacLure (2005) call “precepts (or pretexts).” Thus, to restore the non-linearity that Burman and MacLure consider to be the core of their method, I resist numbering these “steps”, as that would create hierarchization and false ordering.

See the world, your data and yourself as a text, with all that that implies. This process required a reflexivity to give up claims for “direct access to reality” (MacLure, 2005, p. 287) that is available to me as a researcher or to my participant. In this step, I critically examined taken for granted terms such as childhood, classroom, school, parents, empowerment, and consent. I also paid attention to issues of power and knowledge production and deconstructed and reconstructed structures in the project that complicated or inhibited the emergence of children’s voices. More simply, I attempted to notice what mothers heard and failed to hear and examined the power relations implicit in the utterances and gestures of the mothers’ and children’s narratives. Such work did not alienate or foreclose parents and children from sharing meanings, but rather invited me to consider how hegemonic voices were maintained and perpetuated as truth.

Look for the binary oppositions in the text. I carefully considered interview transcripts, ensemble drawings, and Child-Map practices, and I noted contradictions and counter-arguments. In writing, I incorporated difference— different representations, different theories, diverse meanings, and singular and divergent voices (themes that were only spoken by one participant, or even those that contradicted the uniform themes).

In writing against the binary opposition, it is important to reflect that such opposition does not consider one idea to be superior to the other, but brings it onto an equal platform. Derrida (1967/1976) questions opposition where one ideology is considered to be superior over the other. In my work, I make efforts to present contradictory ideas and arguments such that both might be true. Such a transgression resists the formation of a singular hegemonic discourse of empowerment or even childhood. In relation to this process, Burman (2005) writes, “apply ... just that sort of pressure to ostensibly simple texts relating to childhood and children, opening these texts up to a perplexing surplus of contested and conflicting meanings” (p.33).

Self of the researcher. I also noticed my own reactions, my own feelings, my own subjectivity, and my own biases. Instead of writing such reflections in the beginning of the analysis as bracketing, which either separates the process of self-reflectivity from writing, or implicitly urges us to forget ourselves, my voice (s) will be integrated in each section, often emerging in and during the analysis. Besides the issue of power, phenomenology and deconstruction also acknowledge the identity and the self of the researcher and the researched embedded in the process. While I have already discussed the project's responsibility to think of issues of power and bias, I also focused on the inter-subjectivity of my counter-power and transformation. Phenomenological and deconstructive ventures transform. They operate in the space of who we are and who we may become. This endeavor "formatively informs, reforms, transforms, and performs the relation between being and practice." (Van Manen, 2007, p. 26). The valuable transformation the Child-Map Study accorded was transformative empathy towards the parents, against the binary of oppressor and oppressed. In interviewing, I encountered their tears, their yearning to know about the worlds of their children, their mourning of a lost world, and their wish to authentically listen and contribute to the well-being of their children's worlds. In such an encounter, I witnessed a sense of humanness towards those that I had "othered" or labelled as a powerful oppressor of children's unique perspectives. Fine (1994) points out that oppressive systems can create such a binary, in which "a picture of a homogenous culturally dominant group is pitted against a picture of an equally homogenous group of outsiders on the periphery" (p.79). Such a dichotomy creates a "/" between the parent (oppressor) / and the child (oppressed), undermining that parents and children are part of a structure that disempowers both.

Challenging taken for granted assumptions. As the name suggests, in my text I questioned taken for granted ideas, specifically those that are believed to be for the well-being of

the child and to open up textual spaces that seemed to close, reverse, muddle or confound things. In addressing issues of power, I accept that we cannot know everything, nor can I survey power as if I can fully understand, control or redistribute it. What I do is something more modest but, perhaps, rather more radical: to inscribe into my research practices what St. Pierre (1997) calls shifting my question from “what does this mean” to “how do meanings change”? How have some meanings emerged as normative and others disappeared or become marginalized? What does such a revelation say (and/or hide) about the constitution of power?

Writing Politically

For both phenomenology and deconstruction, writing is a political act, inviting and inciting author and readers in and opening up spaces: writing in ways that are explicitly political or knows itself to be political or that futures a political end. Writing as political is also a call for writing that is just, that is, can we write in ways that serve justice, or the other, a writing “for” and by the other, and which are, as a result, implicitly and by definition, political. Richardson and St. Pierre (2008), as well as Van Manen (2006) remind us that the writing process and product are deeply interlinked phenomena which cannot be isolated from each other. Such an acceptance not only addresses that writing is contextual, but also encourages us to write differently. For Van Manen (2006) and Richardson & Pierre (2008), writing is related to how a knowledge system disciplines itself. St. Pierre (1997) argues that “to write differently is a condition for producing different knowledge and producing knowledge differently” (p. 175). As Sarah McLafferty (1995) reminds us, it is the interpretive act that is the key site of academic (feminist) power. If the interpretive act is the key site of power, a different kind of interpretive writing is needed--a writing that can itself be political. Thus, in accepting writing as my

important method of analysis, there are two conceptual ways in which I write the analysis of this dissertation differently and politically. Firstly, I re-imagine the usage of the titles “the researcher” and “the researched.” Secondly, I unpack the usage of footnotes in my writing.

The Researcher and the Researched

So these patients are totally dependent on you,” Mrs. Das said. [...] “In a way, more dependent on you than the doctor.” “How do you mean? How could it be?” “Well, for example, you could tell the doctor that the pain felt like a burning, not straw. The patient would never know what you had told the doctor, and the doctor wouldn’t know that you had told the wrong thing. It’s a big responsibility. (Lahiri, 2000, p. 51)

In revisiting the story “Interpreter of Maladies,” this episode touches upon the complexity, importance, and responsibility of the interpreter. Mrs. Das not only honors Mr. Kapasi’s work at the doctor’s clinic with her characterization thereof as a “big responsibility,” but she also complicates who the “real” doctor is. Such questioning is very close to my research, since in taking the walk with their children, narrating and guiding them through the instructions, noting down their process with their intricate observations, aiding them in marking pins, and making observations about the Child-Map Study after the research, it was the parents and the peers (for fifth and eighth graders) who became the “primary” researchers and I the co-researcher. While any research does blur and even reverse the boundary between the researcher with me as the co-researcher, in the Child-Map study this boundary became even more complicated as I became like the doctor whose craft and task rested in the translation and interpretation of parents (mothers).

In ethnographic fieldwork, such a close companion of the “primary” researcher has often been named an “interlocutor” or “informant” (Crapanzano, 1980, p. 144). Spivak (1989) writes about the significance of breaking the binary of the researcher and the audience and invites the

audience to be a co-investigator. Such an equal participation in research has been present in cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1996) and participatory studies that consider participants both as co-researchers and co-subjects. The researcher usually takes the role of the group facilitator, offering assistance to his/her co-researchers (Hart, 1997).

Both phenomenology and deconstruction value the role of the co-researcher, as “the interviewee becomes the co-investigator of the study” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 98). However, I still find such a binary of researcher and co-researcher problematic, where “other” in unintended and unintentional ways receives a position secondary to the “primary” researcher. I do not wish to entitle the “other” with the academic and often compensatory titles of “co,” while simultaneously adding statements of caution that co-researchers are equal to and even higher than the researcher. The word researcher does have a power embedded in it, and the word “co” would always appear to be a substitution power against it. Fine (1994) calls such a dichotomy the hyphen of self and other that maintains the professional voice of the research and noisy dialect of the Other (p. 73). In order to move away from such a hierarchizing, I present my analysis as research stories that highlight the ambiguities and instabilities of the identities of researcher and researched and attend to shifting convergences and divergence that are structured within any encounter. I provide accounts either using names (pseudonyms) or speak in singular voices (child or mother). Such an inclusivity of diverse researchers, diverse conversations, and diverse identities in my work is an acknowledgement that a wider spectrum of voices matter in making and remaking transformative knowledge. For me the positionality of my parents (mothers) and children are not merely to extract raw data that I as a researcher can explain with refined conclusions and theories; rather, my work takes a detour and my writing style a close honoring of their voices.

Furthermore, since in academia stories and narratives of children and parents are often

written about in the aggregate, and with thematic assurances and claims to organized “truth,” the stories and truths of parents and children have been sacrificed, or became subservient and doubtful, and outside of the interpretive filter of the researcher. I have always been skeptical of such academic certainty. Thus, my desire to honor children and parents’ voices is also to address the hegemony of “knowledge production” and “[unsettle] the megastructure of the academy” (Escobar, 2008, p. 306). The goal is to produce what Arturo Escobar calls “other knowledges and knowledge otherwise” (p. 306). Such a detour to the complexity of the researcher and the researched in research is a challenge to the dominant trajectories of the construction of knowledge, welcoming inter-cultural practices, thinking, and dialoguing that is closer to diverse voices present in the Child-Map Study. The effort is collaborative but that in which the mothers and the children had a power more than me. Such de-monopolization of my expertise opens up the scope of the research to include and acknowledge voices that have not been typically considered academic.

My initial hesitancy in writing this dissertation was that I did not want to adopt the position of an all-seeing and all-knowing researcher; however, while I can disown that claim, I cannot erase the power structure that academic writing embodies. The dissertation can at best come closer to *translating or speaking with* rather than *speaking for* children’s true voice. Thus, instead of disowning one’s position, I adopt a different owning. I do not claim to write from the position of writing “a truth;” instead I aspire to capture polymorphous voices that resist the formation of a dominant truth. Harrison (2016) articulates that writing is always partial and contextual, thus acknowledging and freeing us to write in diverse ways and open the freedom to tell and re-tell. She says there is no such thing as getting it right, only “getting it” differently contoured and nuanced.

Footnotes

The second important shift in my writing is the significance accorded to footnotes. Even though footnotes are an integral part of every text, its designation at the margins can make us oblivious to its dialogical and critical relation with the text. However, in each section of this dissertation, deconstruction enters both in the main text but also through writing at the margins that is often in footnotes. However, the voices at the margins or footnotes in deconstruction are equal to the main text. Benstock (1983) reminds us that footnotes in academic work often lie at the margins, giving space to references, commentaries, or negotiating grounds between the different authors— “It never enters the main text and often touches diametrically opposed claims, making notations cooperative with the text but not intrinsic to it and insisting that comments be both inner and outer-directed” (p. 204). Embedded at the margins, the footnotes are short; they are part of the text and add what is missing in the text but not engulfing it; they address the criticism, and participate in dialogue with the reader, giving voice to the shifting discourse. Benstock (1983) says:

It is essentially this closed circle of reasoned criticism that footnotes negotiate, clarifying hidden assumptions, pointing out referential pre-texts, insisting that the author engage readers in the critical process. Finally, footnotes appear to be (and often are) afterwards, appended to a text that is not in itself fully accessible to readers; the notes allow the writer to anticipate readers’ needs, to answer potential questions, to hedge whatever bets the critical discourse may have made. They allow the writer to step outside the critical discourse and comment on it from a perspective that may be different from (and in a voice that may be separate from) that established in the text. (p. 204)

By not following the rules of writing, formality, academia, or linearity that is forced on the text,

the footnotes are fenced off (literally) from the text, but this fencing should not accord it the position of being only a margin (indifferent or irrelevant) to the main text. In my chapters, the deconstruction enters both from the margin and in the main text, resisting deterministic reading of the text. Thus, they sustain polymorphous voices in the text. This is my aspiration in writing this work: that voices can co-exist, questions can live, and answers can resist the desire to form unifying solutions.

Chapter 3: Play Spaces as Political Ground

I perceive the world as a playground
Where dawn and dusk appear in eternal rounds

— Mirza Ghalib
The World is a Playground (1797)

Play spaces have a special function in the discourse of school; surrounding the main school building, they are spaces explicitly marked and designated for children. Different and in some ways separate, yet simultaneously part of the school, this space as such may well carry and prompt different rules and ways of being. In a Foucauldian (1984) sense, play spaces can be considered as a heterotopia: “those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others” (p. 252). In this chapter, I will present thematically arranged narratives derived from children’s ensemble voices (i.e. narrative drawings) in response to the question asked during the Child-Map Study: “What are the places you liked and disliked?” These themes emerged through my applications of the aforementioned Van Manen (1990) and Burman and MacLure (2005) methods to the text, together with Eva Simms’s (2008) method to the drawings inscribed on the ensemble voices. The verbal themes, complemented with drawings, capture the diverse functions that the places at the Waldorf grounds served for children. These ensemble voices (verbal and drawing) also offered scope to understand the meaning of children’s places through their different modes of expressions.

However, designation of a play space *only* for children does not necessarily grant complete immunity from adult-centric power structures, given that space is the primary way in which power is exercised (Foucault, 1984). Thus, in its deconstructive commitment, the chapter brings forth how children found a place in an adult-centric world and unpacks how their place-

making was impacted by the presence of adult and adult-centric structures. Thus, this chapter captures an *ensemble of voices*, by bringing together converging, diverging, and conflicting voices that coincided in the Waldorf playground.¹⁴ It closely attends to found places, marginalized places, natural places, and remembered places as it attends to the larger question of children's desire to find a place in an adult world. Although the emphasis on each theme varies from narrative to narrative, the general structure is consistent throughout. These themes are by no means discrete or categorical, and each theme is interwoven with others. It is from this political ethos, where hearing voices is a process, where empowerment rests in embracing the spaces that difference makes, that I present the polymorphous voices that echoed across each other's ensemble voices.

Speaking from Action Spaces

“So much stuff to do.” Play spaces are often about activity and movement. One of the few words in English which continue to track so close to its etymological origins, from the old

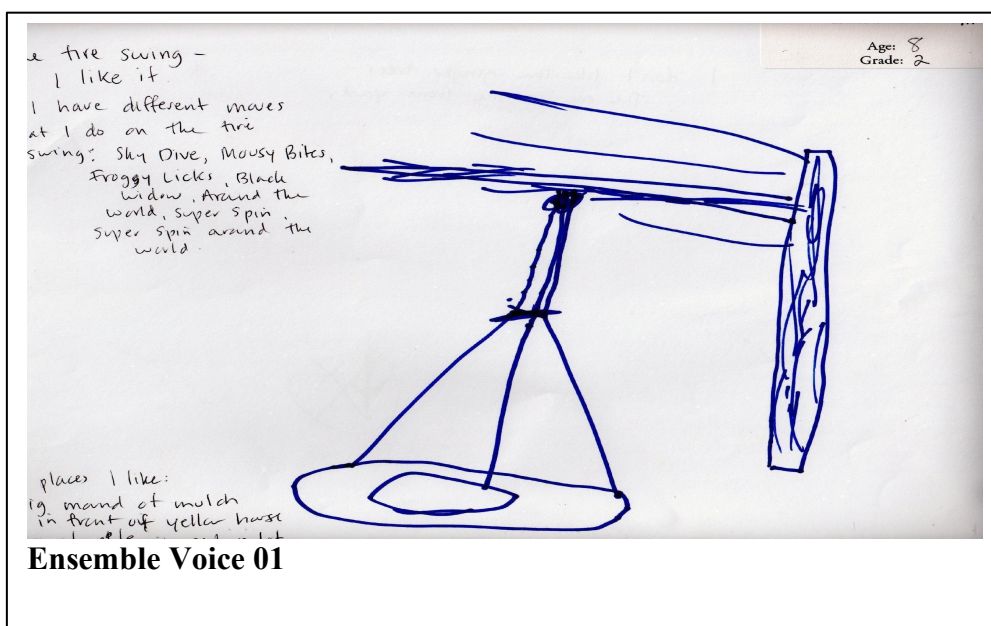
¹⁴ An important issue to discuss before beginning the analysis concerns the issue of gender pronouns in this chapter. In being sensitive to the issue of anonymity, we used age and grade as the primary markers of identification in the child map, thereby neglecting an important identity marker: gender. This omission in the study is significant since playgrounds are the first arenas in which girls and boys learn to negotiate their behavior in public (Hart, 1979; Karsten, 2003; Titman, 1994). Thus, with adherence to gender anonymity in our child map study, we do miss an important political voice that could have been present in the Waldorf grounds. Such an acknowledgment does not alienate or foreclose sharing meanings or relevance of meaning but rather invites us to consider how hegemonic voices can be maintained and perpetuated even among “politically sensitive” researchers and in “politically inclusive” research. To mend this unexpected limitation, I will use the pronoun “she” throughout the chapter, excepting explicit indications or specific instances where a male pronoun is called for. I refer back to Burman (2008), who encourages us to use the pronoun “she”, departing from the conventional usage of “he” that has dominated developmental psychology specifically, but also psychology in general. Like Burman, I urge the reader to notice the “strangeness” and impact of such usage of the pronoun “her” on us as readers for the very artifice of gender and its deployment in matrices of power and politics.

Dutch to “jump for joy”, to “dance” and to “be glad”, the space within which such play happens elicited one of the few themes which were similar and unitary for most children’s experiences across all age groups. With one or two words or phrases such as “I like to do pushes on it” (second grader) or “spinning fast” (second grader), many children communicated that for them, liked and disliked places were marked by the possibilities they opened up or foreclosed for play. Thus, to be liked, the place had to offer things to do, and children criticized spaces that did not offer room or possibilities for any activities. With minimal words, a third grader commented on her fondness for a place by stating, “Play structure—so much stuff to do.” In his phenomenological analysis of children’s perceptions of playgrounds, Jansson (2008) revealed that children often corrected the word “good” and replaced it with “You mean fun?” To be fun, Jansson (2008) highlight the playground had to provide “things to do,” preferably “much to do” or “many things” (p. 94), and most children criticized playgrounds that did not offer enough activities. Indeed, children interpret the landscape and the terrain as functions (Gibson, 1979; Heft, 1988). Gibson (1979) calls this the concept of affordances, that is, the intrinsic qualities of places and things which are identified because of their functional significance or meaning for the person in the environment. Thus, one possible way of understanding children’s play spaces is by what they can do in and with them. The spaces on the school grounds that provided children with a diverse range of affordances supported possibilities to create new ones over time or continued to hold their interest and became special places. Liked places also mostly promoted exploration and actualization of different activities and offered affordances for shaping and reshaping the physical characteristics of the places. This continued engagement encouraged children to participate in and care for the place and to imagine new roles for places, things, and themselves.

If we take this conclusion further, we can begin to see the relationality between things, places, and bodies. Place is, of course, not a blank objective space, but finds its essence through things. As Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) emphasizes, space is more abstract than place, and that what begins in experience as an undifferentiated space becomes a place. As one gradually experiences a setting, one comes to know it better through lived experiences, and thus attributes certain meanings to it. We respond bodily to place. The spatial and textural dimension of things are brought to life by the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Simms, 2008). In playgrounds, play structures and equipment are instruments that often give space a spirit of place. Play structures commonly find meaning based on the opportunities they open for our embodiment. For Levinas (1961/1979), body labors in the world to the end of enjoyment. We enjoy our lives in the world through and in our bodies. For a child, the body becomes predictable in encounters with the things and it is the things (e.g. play structures) that invite the child's body, or as Simms (2008) would say, "Things call to the body" (p. 67). The child shapes the environment and is in turn shaped by it.

In several children's ensemble voices, play structures that offered multiple bodily possibilities found a special reference. A kindergartener communicated, "Swinging, sliding through monkey bars," while another sixth grader expressed "Play structure, monkey bars. I like to flip on them." A fifth grader added, "Tire swing—it's fun to swing on." Additionally, a second grader voiced her love for the tire swing because it unlocked avenues to "spinning fast" and to spin "different kinds of spins." For the child, an interaction with things is also a connection with the world of gestures that extend invitations to the body. The various aspects of the body are known from their functional value in their interactions with the things. As Merleau-Ponty (1964) says, "the truth is there are no things, only physiognomies" (p.168). Play structures frequently

hold the interest of the child by providing an opportunity to create new physiognomies over time. With sliding, swinging, and flipping, the body is introduced to new ways of being. Children in school frequently live in restricted postures, being constrained to a chair that their bodies fight through fixed and static spaces. It is the playground that predominantly provides ample opportunity to swing and to be swung around, to engage in postural acrobatics, to use one's muscles and feel the thrill of temporary disorientation. It is often the play structures of the Waldorf grounds that allow children to experience their bodies in ways that are not defined by normative benchmarks. Thus, in interactions with things one is introduced to ways of being-in-the-world that create multiple, infinite, and different possibilities, thereby keeping the intentional arc of the body open. Let us engage with the movements that swing provides to the embodied world of the child. When we look closely at the ensemble voice 01, one evidently notices that the size of swing hanging upwards is enlarged and is disproportionate to the beam that supports it. Simms (2008) reminds us that children's drawings capture the affective experience in contradiction to the objective experience. For the child, the swing seemingly dominates the drawings as it is the most meaningful object of her experience.



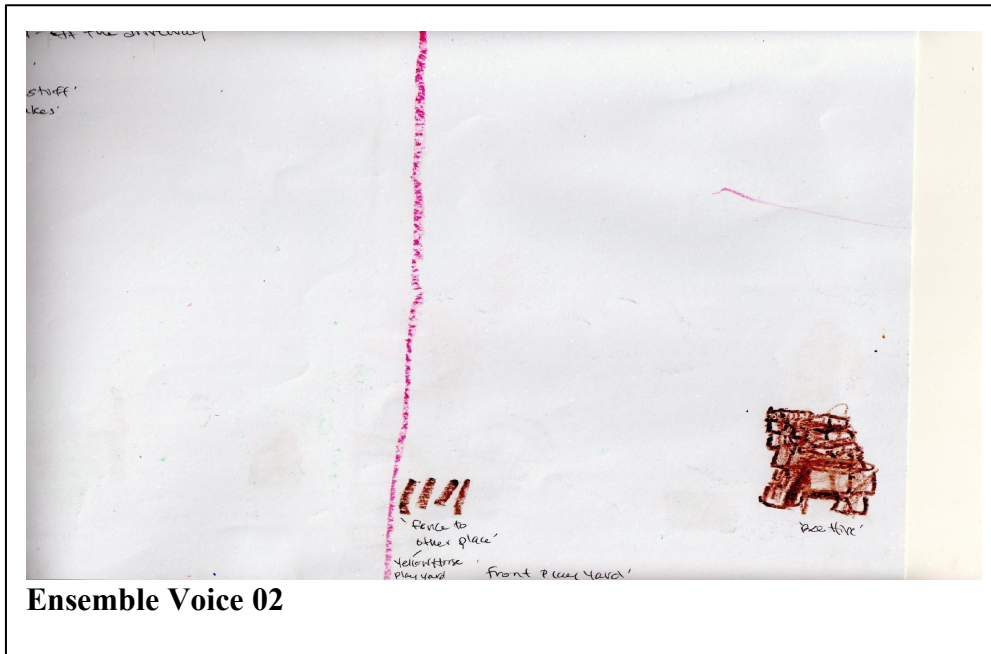
The child gives the object meaning through its use (Bjorklid, 1982). The enlarged lower part of the swing, its flowing movement in the space (rather than a stationary depiction) captures the psychological depth, affective experience, and embodied relationship of being on the swing for the child. The swing as an instrument allows the child to flow ahead in the air and experience the expansion of the body. With the swing moving upwards, the child is greeted with the soft breeze on the cheeks, and when her feet rest on the ground to take another stroke the child experiences the security of the ground. The earth's solid and firm form, according to Thiis-Evensen (1987) confronts us with an "existential reality:" "This firmness is a precondition for our existence on earth imbedded within us as a fundamental background for our entire feeling of security" (p. 34). This floating in the air and the quality of expansion was also provided by a sixth grader for whom her "Favorite spot is the catwalk here—it feels like I'm standing on a strip of wood in the air with no gravity." One can imagine that in everyday interactions it is not possible for a body to experience such a floating sensation.

"You can make things out of it." While we have spoken about how play structures introduced the child to different ways of embodiment, another dimension that made the place valuable for most children was its potential to create things. A fifth grader cited the wood shed as her favorite place because "I enjoy crafting." For another kindergartener, the sandbox, with better tools, became a favorite space. Nature and elements of nature, such as branches, were also valuable because of their possibility to "make things out of" (nursery grader). The "loose parts" or natural materials in the environment were necessary to engage the children in "self-directed play" (Keeler, 2015). Such play predominantly allows the child to engage in what Tuan (1991) calls "full play" that is free from the rules of grown-ups. Playing in a diverse environment of the

playground invited them to move, create, and change space for themselves and to explore new possibilities dormant in the place. As Merleau-Ponty (1963) says, “Habit expresses our power of dilating our being in the world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments” (p. 143). It is through crafting, using tools in the sandbox, or making things with trees and branches that the child is often introduced to being an active creator on the world stage and her intentionality is perhaps made visible. It is in the play of the fingers in the sandbox and the traces she leaves in the sand that a child discovers her own boundaries (Simms, 2008). It is in the sandbox that the child’s hand is *touching* the sand and is being *touched* by it. It is also when the harshness or smoothness of the wood is crafted by the chisels and knives that the child can often witness her own gestures and possibility for new gestures. It is through their participation with the place and things that the children not only discovered the possibilities that the places and things provided (each place and thing calling for different action and different self), but also an understanding of their own selves. The features of the self are not only mirrored in places and things, but places lead to the discovery of the self. As the child engages with places and things, she not only integrates parts of herself, but perhaps also gains access to new parts of herself. In the encounter with the tree or the swing, the child frequently meets her own self. It is also in this play that the child might learn that she can arrange or structure the world according to her intentionality. Gadamer (1975/2004) says, “Play becomes the location where agency and selfhood are exercised” (p. 113). It is in play that the child realizes that there are parts of the world that cannot be changed, introducing oneself to the limitation of oneself. In both ways, one comes closer to self-awareness.

“It is boring.” In contrast to the places that were liked, disliked places were mainly associated with the lack of play instruments and a feeling of boredom. A kindergartener

commented: “No stuff to dig with.” Another kindergartener expressed, “It has barely any stuff. No shovels or rakes.” The figures in ensemble voice 01 appear to be smaller, lacking details as compared to the swing drawn in the ensemble voice 02.



In engaging with the ensemble voice, one evidently experiences an absence of narrative or play: what the child did, felt, or how she moved in this space with these play structures. In other ensemble voices, some children commented on the sense of boredom they felt at disliked places. A sixth grader commented: “The reason I do not like the open space in the grade play yard is because it is boring.” Another fifth grader commented, “Monkey bars-boring,” and a third grader “Can’t do anything there. It’s boring.” A parent of a first grader also noted the bored voice with which the child commented on the disliked place. What is this sense of boredom that the child experiences in a place?

The phenomenon of boredom is intricately connected with the sense of time. Heidegger (1929/2008) uses the example of waiting for the train to illustrate this experience of boredom. In

absence of distraction of the newspaper, of conversation with the friend, we experience the rawness of time and most of all, experience ourselves. With nothing to distract us, we experience ourselves and our existence stretched through time. The sense of time that usually remains beyond our awareness is brought to the forefront in the experience of boredom. For children, time is not always a cognitive abstraction, but deeply woven into the matrix of actions and events of the day. Simms (2008) gives the example of “It cannot possibly be afternoon since naptime has not happened yet” (p. 137). When play structures and places do not provide shovels, tools, or instruments, or spaces do not open up plenary possibilities for exploration, they can close off the promise for time to unfold and pleasurable futures or selves to disclose. The play structures and places do not provide an invitation to discover oneself or uncover an unimagined future.

Minkowski (1970), following Bergson’s notion, describes *elan vital* as the dynamic origin of human life— a feeling of participation in a flowing onward, necessarily expressed in terms of time. *Elan vital* is the call towards the possibility of future, but when things do not extend an invitation for play, boredom is lived. Yet, in our present world where smart phones, internet, and radios have filled “gaps” and “silences,” Bachelard (1958/1969) reminds us that it is a blessing for a child to have periods of pure boredom even to the point of tears.

He says:

There are children who will leave a game to go and be bored in a corner of the garret.

How often have I wished for the attic of my boredom when the complications of life made me lose the very germ of all freedom! (p. 17)

Speaking about Marginalized Places

“I’m not even going to write anymore about it.” The majority of children seemed genuinely distressed by places that were unkempt, describing them as: “messy, dirty, gross, and

ugly.” Researchers such as Sideris and Stieglitz (2002) and Titman (1994) noticed that most children experience significant distress when their playgrounds are dirty, believing that the way the place looked reflected on them. Jansson (2008) and Sideris and Stieglitz (2002) noted that the maintenance and care of play spaces was affected by gender composition, with several girls¹⁵ disliking spaces that are dirty or in bad condition.

What is this experience of “dirty” for the child? In the ensemble voices, several children captured the diverse sensory experience of being in a “dirty” space. Textures, smells, sounds, and sight mainly became important elements in the invitation that the place had for them. As we are reminded by Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) and Simms (2008), space is experienced through the contours of the body and the various senses obscure the boundary between the outside and inside of the body. The words “stink, smell, and nasty” were primarily used to capture the element of smell that made places around the “gingko tree, compost, and dumpster” inhospitable. It is the nose that introduces us to traces of things that have “happened in the space and that will happen in this space” (Simms, 2008, p. 28). An eighth grader described the experience of the gingko tree as “The gingkoes are gross and smell really bad when you step on them. Plus, I feel like it’s not very welcoming when there are nasty smelling gingko berries.” For the eighth grader, the pungent smell of the berries inhibited an invitation from the place or the likelihood to stay or play in and around the space. The smell often overpowered the child’s experience, who then wishes to leave instead of exploring the possibilities that rested in the place. However, the same gingko tree that was despised by most group of older children was beloved to several younger children. For many younger children, trees still fostered the potential to climb and create things

¹⁵ I cite this study to keep the voice of gender dynamics alive.

out of the fallen berries and branches. They were possibly able to bear the messiness of the nature and the smell of the berries in the space, as it opened opportunities to play. It may also have been because the gingko tree and the space around it was abandoned and despised by most older children and adults that it became an ideal spot for younger children, where imaginative play could live beyond the interruption of adults and older children.

The smell, however, is not a distant sensory experience for a child. A fifth grader's description introduced us to the embodied experience of the powerful smell: "I despise the leaf/compost pile. It stinks and it looks bad. I'm not even going to write anymore about it." To write about it is to evidently bring it back into remembrance in the here and now and to relive the multiplicity of the unwelcoming space for one's being right now. The smells of the tree, even though part of nature, were experienced as not belonging to the space. The berries' odor emanated as a reminder that there were aspects of nature that were messy, wild, and grotesque and that could exist beyond human capacity to tame according to human-centric aesthetic sensibilities. Most of us, do try to tame nature by trimming the overgrown grass, by cutting the branches of the tree that haunts our space and makes nature safe enough to co-exist and invite human activities. However, the smell as a sensory experience overflows, overpowers, and pervades uncontrolled. The smell of the berry tree often does not extend a sweet invitation to our senses and our perceptual engagement with the world, but is a reminder that nature is "convoluted, confusing, muddy, wet, picky, full of obstacles and indifferent and dangerous to us (Simms, 2017, p. 446).

Similarly, the smell of the compost pile and dumpster haunts the spaces. The compost pile carries traces of human activity (e.g., food, vegetables, leaves), which decompose in a smelly and repulsive manner. The compost, like the dumpster, stays around for a while: "it does

not fade away (or fade very slowly) into the background and it interrupts the balance of the whole (Simms, 2014, p. 239). The smell of the compost and the dumpster exist as a reminder of activities that happened before the child, and that may or may not belong to them. It is an intimation that the space is used by others and for activities other than play who are not taking responsibility for how it might be perceived and used by the children. While the compost and the dumpster can be understood as an encroachment of the “child’s space” by adults’ activities and that do not belong there, the smell of the berry is nature’s assertion on the space that can be experienced as an intrusion by humans.

The experience of smell was also largely connected with vision: that which stinks also “looks bad” or was presumed to. The lived experience of “gross and dirty” was interconnected with the visual. In the ensemble voices, some children repetitively used the word “eye sore” or “offend my eyes” to describe things that were gross and dirty for them. Few children also commented on the aesthetic mismatch of the spaces that prevented them from engaging with the play space. Several of them noticed the weeds: “it’s filled with weeds and is ugly” (fifth grader); unmanaged grass: “grass needs to be cut” (fifth grader); unmatched structures: “Doesn’t match, ugly, no use” (a fourth grader on the grey house); and the boring colors: “the yellow color of the yellow house is nasty, boring and ugly” (fifth grader). Thus, for the child, space is not an objective reality but the aesthetic sensibility of the space rests on its inter-subjective enticement to the body. What offends my eyes or distresses my nose becomes aversive; “dirty and messy” bring the mess of the space to the mess of the body.

The similar metaphor of overflow, surplus of nature, and unmanaged adult activity that overpowered most children’s bodies in encounter with the ginkgo tree, compost, and dumpster can be noticed in the messiness evoked by the unkempt and unmanaged weeds. While the long-

grown grasses and bushes were appreciated by several younger children as an invitation to hide, for others the overgrown grasses and weeds created a confusion around the productivity and utility of the space. For numerous children in the Waldorf playgrounds, overgrown, disproportionate grasses and untamed weeds disturbed their bodily engagement with spaces. The play spaces felt encroached, upon, and the functionality of the space felt obscured; one is not sure how to move around, or for what purpose the space is designated. It begins to appear strange and alien. The child possibly wants the invitation of the space to continue rather than be disrupted by the feralness of nature. When the children were able to continue playing, the feralness of nature evidently became imaginative and adventurous; when nature interrupted play, the space appears ugly and unaesthetic.

Reading the ensemble voices of children and child-centric literature (Jansson, 2008; Titman, 1994) that frequently cited children's frustrated response to dilapidated and disheveled spaces re-iterated that spaces are powerfully related to the care and attention that adults—institutions—are paying to them. The overgrown grass, dirt, or weeds seemingly communicated an apathy and neglect to not only children's spaces but also their entitlement to equal resources in the community. That which is not cared for can communicate that it is not worthy of being attended to. The child mostly wants the aesthetic sensibility and niceness but not decorative and ornamental plants. She wants spaces that can be messy but not prohibit invitations to play. This was evident in the children's experience of the mud on the grounds.

Mud on the playground added an important layer of “good dirty” and “bad dirty.” Children frequently despised muddy areas that caused resistance to play or opposed their body movement, such as mud that could not be dug or that which made the playground a slippery play space. As an eighth grader expressed, “when it rains it is muddy.” Several children also did not

appreciate the mud that deteriorated the aesthetic appearance of their favorite place. An eighth grader said, “It has mud all over the walls and the floor is nasty.” However, numerous children appreciated mud for its value of fun and the tactile sensation—for instance, when digging “potholes.” A fifth grader voiced: “When it rained, it was fun to dig in the mud.” The mud comes with its own possibilities, opening and introducing the children to the gesture of their own bodies. The potholes can be dug by these hands, the dug hole can be filled by water, the mud can slip away and change forms. The mud responds to the touch of the hand, leaving traces of visceral pleasure. Mud interacts with the child, the slipping in the mud introduces the child to the fluid contours of the body, with its softness: “it can be dug up or smoothed, hollowed or stacked, filtered or packed together” (Simms, 2008, p. 112). In encountering the mud, the child is perhaps introduced to the structure of the world that can be changed and the child can be changed in return.

“Please take this into consideration.” The broader research question that the Child-Map Study posed to the children was in regard to their liked and disliked places. However, some children also took this opportunity to express a range of their experiences, including frustration and anger towards damaged spaces. At different moments of engagement with the child data, I was overpowered by the feeling that several children were speaking to the school authority through our research. It is in this theme that the implicit dissatisfied voice came to the forefront. Most children voiced a confident, demanding, frustrated, solution-oriented, and authoritative voice. In hearing their voice, I felt I was opening a “feedback box” with each anonymous letter marking their grievances to the school.

“Cracked gravel patches... it’s kind of annoying.” Children spend a great deal of time on the grounds and their intimate relation to places made them aware of all the kinds of problems

they were encountering. With certain annoyance and anger they identified “every cracked cement” (eighth grader), “cracks on the gravel patches” (eighth grader), “broken fence” (eighth grader), and “broken door” (eighth grader).

While some children limited their sharing to identifying the problematic and damaged areas, others took a step further and exercised their expertise to provide the school (adults) with *simple* solutions that could be implemented with “minimal labor.” A fifth grader asserted, “The lack of plant life is the problem I have with it. It is ugly and boring, and needs to look more friendly. Please take this into consideration.” An eighth grader expressed “Though pillars are damaged...I would suggest repair, however it could be improved through minimal labor. Continuing on the subject, the yellow house needs to be redecorated.” The emphasis on “minimal labor” and “please take this into consideration” conceivably communicated that these changes and demands are reasonable, urgent, and would not cause the adults/school authority that much effort or inconvenience to undertake; that is why it should be taken up by the adults without much delay. Some children also owned their expertise and wisdom and advised rules that would solve the difficulties that they were encountering. For instance, a fifth grader in a firm tone commanded: “There should be a rule you can’t splatter mud on it.” Thus, children frequently disclosed the everyday struggles they lived through on the playground in diverse voices and by adopting different stances—sometimes confident, sometimes bargaining, or sometimes annoyance to make their voices heard.

Many children also expressed a sense of discontentment that adults (school authorities) appeared oblivious to both issues and possible solutions that seemed obvious to the children. In some children’s accounts this obviousness was captured by the words “stupid” and “useless.” An eighth grader commented: “I don’t like that the basketball hoop is locked up after hours. It’s

stupid since it's there to be used." Another expressed, "The fence—if you kick a ball you have to go around and pick it up." Children are often not used to their own views being interesting to adults (Hill, 2006), and it seems plausible that when asked, the colloquial language of teenagers entered the ensemble voice.

On the ensemble voices, some children marked the traces of their needs and demands with simple phrases: "Need a tether ball," "need football," "need soccer." Another fifth grader said, "It would be awesome if you could put a soccer field somewhere." On one hand, children's expressions could be taken as suggestions to improve the playground, since the purpose of the research was to involve the school community in renovating their grounds. However, in reading through some of these responses, my colleague, one of the readers on my committee, and myself had similar feelings and thoughts: "Oh God! These kids are so demanding." Jansson (2008) comments that children are often critical and demanding to express antipathy towards the adult community when playgrounds do not turn out as they desired. It is, however, important to deconstruct this feeling of "demanding."

In an effort to deconstruct, my engagement will be multi-layered, bringing diverse sides without endorsing one over the other as a singular truth. Our initial reactions of "children being demanding" could very well be embedded in the discourse of childhood. Children and childhood are often powerfully influenced by Rousseau's construction of the "innocent child," where childhood is seen with a certain romanticism as the years of natural goodness, in contrast to the adult who has needs and desires (James, Jenks, & Proutt, 1998). In such a construction, even adults who have lived through childhood commonly look at their own lives with the lens of nostalgia where feelings were uncorrupted, and where a natural blissfulness and joy existed. With such a discourse, our conflicting feelings of encountering children's demands seems

reasonable. Should not the child be happy with what they have? Weren't we happy with what we had? Why then the demands for things? Is it just a product of consumerism that is corroding our children? It is reasonable to assume that demands and the market economy are connected. Juliet Schor (2004), in her book *born to buy*, traces the historical perspective on marketing of children's products and its deep entrenchment in consumerism. She notices with the increased trend of children's involvement in family decisions, advertisements focused on building children's identity as separate from adults, who now needed to convince their "uncool" and "repressive" parents to buy products that were "cooler." (This assumption of adults being uncool is very similar to the ways in which children at the Waldorf school saw the obliviousness of the school authority as "stupid.") Thus, two divergent and hostile identities were created. Children now not only needed products that were only meant for them but also had to convince their parents of its necessity.

Thus, the challenge that we are posed with is: Do we simply dismiss children's desire for play equipment as consumeristic? Or do we listen to their voice as a wish to make their play spaces their own? Toys, things, and play equipment open infinite possibilities for a child's future desires, sometimes causing great agony when choosing between them (Simms, 2008). As child-centric researchers, parents, and adults, we are thrown by the demands that children make on us. Even in child-centric empowering research, the authority to decide which demands or opinions will be furthered through policies and practical solutions mostly rest in the hands of the adults. In such a power-oriented context, one needs to be reflective and aware of which childhood demands might get ignored because of adult assumptions of "what is best for the child." Things do embody meaning and desires are shaped by the call of things. To put it simply, rejecting children's voices by labelling their desires as capitalistic and consumerist run the risk of

pathologizing and neglecting children's experiences. Instead, we need to shift the lens from *only* considering children's voices as "demanding" to unpacking that desires are always embedded in a complex social and cultural fabric.

The first initiative in adopting a more considerate, thoughtful, and sensitive approach towards listening and integrating children's desire would be by creating spaces where children and adult community members can collaboratively explore the meaning and functions of children's demands. Simple questions could be asked, such as "what would it mean to have a basketball court?" and "what do they enjoy about a tether ball?" Exploring the meaning of these play structures in relation to the community can facilitate critical examination necessary in community research. The child and the adult should be given a space to collaboratively discern, disentangle, and articulate one's own desire from that of other people and the larger culture. For instance, one can critically examine whether the desire to have a basketball court in the Waldorf community was embedded in normative notions of how a school structure and school grounds should appear. As community members, they could be encouraged to contemplate ways in which to build deep connection with things and places, rather than choose things (e.g., play structures or equipment) that can be quickly replaced by newer and other things, an ideology integral to capitalistic consumption. Such a reflection can allow children to contemplate and make choices not only for things and structures that they need right now, but to have play space which would be sustained and enjoyed by other generations. Freedom to choose is an important achievement of child-centric research, but freedom to choose deeply is a rarity that can be fostered by creation of such dialogic spaces.

“This is dangerous.”

In the playground. At the back of our house. There have been some changes.

They said the climbing frame was. NOT SAFE. So they drained it dry.

They said the see-saw was. NOT SAFE. So they took it away.

They said the playground was. NOT SAFE, So they locked it up.

How do you feel?/ Safe?

— Michael Rosen

Wheel Around the World (2012)

Several children in the Child-Map Study conveyed a complex relationship with safety.

They vented serious discontent with equipment that they felt were safety hazards and dangerous:

“The wood fences are unstable, and the metal ones cause injury and can be a safety hazard”

(eighth grader), A fifth grader added: “the pothole got filled up with gravel. This is dangerous.”

For another fifth grader, the monkey bars became an unsafe place because of an accident that took place in third grade. With hurt and resentment, the child uttered: “I do not really care for them since then.” The previous physical hurt that the children underwent possibly fostered their later indifference to the space. However, many children also expressed dissatisfaction about the removal of play equipment that was eliminated for safety reasons: “People cut off the lower branches of the pine trees to make sure kids don’t climb it, but that was the best part” (sixth grader). They were happy to talk about how they had challenged themselves and have used play equipment in ways that could be dangerous. At the same time, there was great discontent with matters that were considered in need of improvement.

Authors such as Rasmussen (2004) and Jansson (2008) have noted that while play equipment has planned functions, children constantly create their own ways of utilizing it, developing in them a sense of pride in exploring unforeseen possibilities. Noschis (1992) argues that using play equipment in their own ways forms part of the process of creating and

demarcating their own identity from the adult world. Children, especially in urban areas, mostly live in environments planned, monitored, and regulated by adults. The prominent view that spaces should be safe and organized in order to function properly has restricted children's freedom to access play spaces. (Berg & Medrich, 1980; Hart, 1989; Maxey, 1999; Mitchel, 1995, Sideris & Stieglitz, 2002). Striniste and Moore (1989) comment that these norms of safety have historical context, as playgrounds were created to segregate juvenile children from precarious cities, where they could safely develop into well-adjusted adults. However, these norms of safety are contraindicative, reducing the degree of "playability" of the space: when children are bored, accidents are more likely (Frost, 1986). Playgrounds then often become an intersection where a child synthesizes expected behaviors and engages in gestures and actions that help them construct their own style in the adult world.

The question we are confronted with is how and when does a challenging place turn into a dangerous place for the child? It seems the difference between the dangerous place and the challenging place was the degree of comfort and control. A parent's account reflected on the sense of cautiousness and comfort in a child's play: "he likes to balance and jump from things, but is cautious...he jumps from the bench, balances on the bench ...without going beyond the comfort zone." A nursery child expressed, "Beehive—I sort of like the big brick wooden house that I climb up on top of, but it's so scary to try to climb down by myself." While ascending gives the hope of being high and up, the feet can be secured carefully and firmly, and the body can enjoy the hardness and groundedness of the ground. Descending introduces us to the depth: looking down one is exposed to the danger of losing control, slipping, and falling. Play equipment becomes dangerous when its movement introduces the child to her passivity. A kindergartener said, "The tire swing. It's a little scary and makes me sick. It moves circular

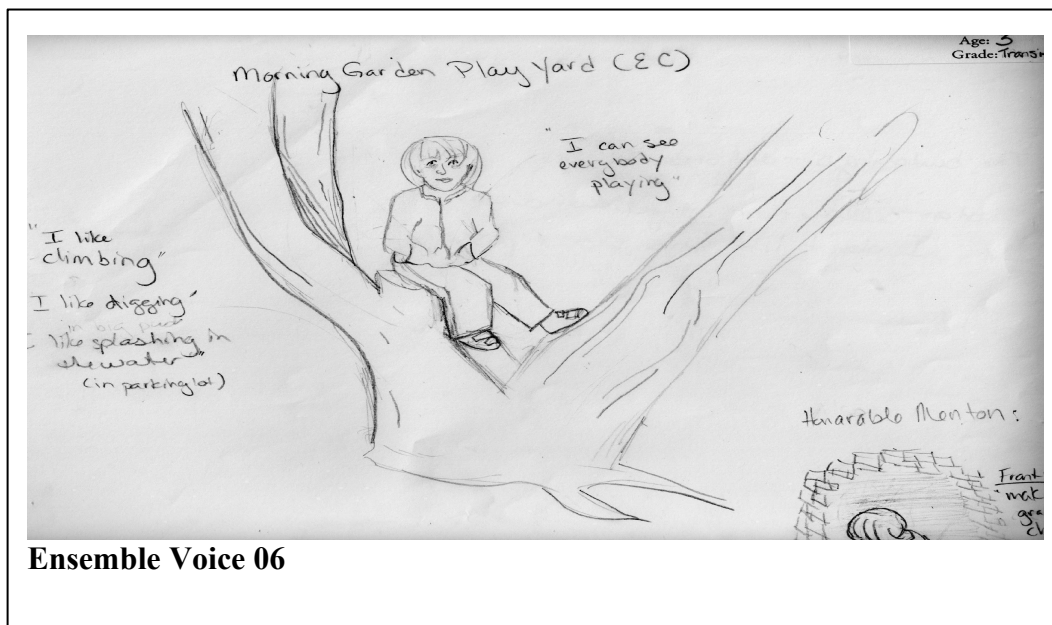
rather than back and forth.” It seems when the swing goes back and forth, it is the child’s feet that control the height and the speed, and the decision to stop rests with the child. However, when the tire swings circularly, it is harder for the child to exercise such control as the swing prescribes how the child is moved: the swing overpowers a child’s demands, moving at a speed that is thrilling but scary, tousling in ways that disorient. Nonetheless, with the hope of brushing the feet on the ground, the child is assured “I can stop when it’s too much.” The difference between “challenging” and “dangerous” is then in this safety of taking back control and being agentic. As an eighth grader voiced, “you can climb the tree, not very high but enough to have fun.” We need places where children can walk and run safely, but we also need places where they can live adventurously. These findings raise concerns for planning and designing play spaces with a range of stimulations that can support and appeal to all children. Spaces that are adventurous to younger children can be boring and sterile to the older children; those that are threatening to younger children can be exciting to older kids.

However, the movement that was considered challenging by all age groups was climbing. Children across all grades reported climbing the monkey bars, bee hive, dome, ladder, and trees as their favorite activity. In climbing, a child is introduced to what Merleau-Ponty (1964) calls the natural intelligence or the corporeal intuition that is trust in the intentionality of the body. The child understands her body not as an “object” but as an embodied intentionality which engages with its specific environment in an increasingly competent way. Climbing structures expose children to move beyond fixed and rule-bound, stiff adult structures. They provide ample opportunity for the active child to engage in different embodiment and experience the thrill of temporary disorientation and postural acrobatics. Chisholm (2008) explains, “in climbing, one reaches beyond the norms, sedimented patterns, and restrictive rules. Each climber pushes the

other to climb ever higher, with no limit on how freely one might ascend” (p.13) For Beauvoir (1952), climbing is when “two free beings confront each other as having on the world a hold that they propose to enlarge; climbing higher than a playmate” (p. 330). By carefully placing her foot on the monkey bar or the branch, extending her hand to grasp the next branch, climbing at her own pace and choosing the height that is safe, for the child, climbing is rooted in the trust in her body and the potential to withstand the danger of falling.

Speaking of Intimacy with Nature

Climbing the beloved trees. While climbing play structures were loved by many kids, the tree and its potential for climbing had a special place in the hearts of children (Moore & Wong, 1997; Titman, 1994; Tuan, 1978). For several children at the Waldorf school, the physiognomy of the tree such as “sturdy branch, thick trunk, lower branches, no poky needles” affected the suitability for climbing. As such, the pine tree found a special meaning for climbing possibilities it afforded. An eighth grader commented: “Even though it is on the small side, it has



really sturdy branches, a thick trunk for climbing up.” Climbing a tree meant bodily contact. Lawrence (1960) describe “the deep satisfaction of clasping the silvery birch trunk against one’s breast and sensing its smoothness and hardness, its vital knots and ridges” (p. 100). With such embodied contact one experiences intimacy with a natural object and place. The other dimension that the tree introduced was “being up” (dimension of height)—the embodiment of enlargement, excitement, expansion, and elevation to the child. A three-year-old enjoyed climbing the tree “because I can see everybody playing.” The tree offered the child the experience of watching without being watched, or what Dovey (1990) calls: “vertical separation from everyday life” (p. 16). The ensemble voice 06 (which seems to be drawn by the parent of the three-year old) captures the enchanting experience of being on top of the sturdy branch of the tree. Seated securely, the branch offers accessibility, visibility, and surveillance of the world. With their small heights, children often look up to the world, to the adult, to things. Trees provide a lens that is not usually present to the child. She can look down and get a bird’s eye view of the world, and yet look further up to the openness of the sky, living a more interconnected perception of the world. A fifth grader commented that trees are a “good place to see the helicopters and planes buzzing around.” Another fifth grader appreciated climbing “as a moment to experience pretty leaves and smells of the blossomed flowers.” Thus, the elevation not only provides a view of the ground, but also of the wideness, expansiveness, and intimacy of being up. On top of a branch, she is no longer a dwarf among giants; she is a giant herself and commands a world. The child is introduced to the impact of projecting herself into the world and up.

Trees form an important landscape in children’s play, being part of the natural world that smoothly blends into child’s play, meeting and serving their diverse needs. While we have been

unpacking the role, natural spaces offer to the child, I want to be careful in not presenting an anthropocentric view where an aspect of nature exists only for the functions that it serves for the child. With the importance of natural spaces and childhood often being reduced to motor development or cognitive development, we are at the risk of prioritizing nature only for the “cogito” centric development it provides to the child. Such a need-based relationality with nature is largely responsible for the current environmental crises. We are then posed with an important question: Do children experience nature beyond a need-based structure? Do children witness the otherness of nature?

In some children’s accounts, one finds that intimacy with nature fostered the skills of noticing subtle differences. They recognized the shape of the trees, the changing color of the flowers, and valued nature for its aesthetic value (fifth grader and eighth grader). Most children enjoyed a range of sensory responses and stimulation: “the music of the birds” singing (nursery); a specific ‘stone’ that gave the place character (fifth and eighth grader). Such attunement left them open to a world all alive, awake, and aware. Throughout numerous children’s accounts, one finds a recognition of nature as an “Other” that addresses us. With words like “aesthetic splendor” and “serenity,” in children’s descriptions, this appreciation for otherness is perhaps not a distant, obscure, abstracted non-relationality but a deeper relationality that retains respect for nature and embodies an ethics of care. Buber (1996) and Gadamer (1992) argue that it is possible to maintain a reciprocal relationship with nature. Buber (1996) says:

The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no aspect of a mood; it confronts me bodily and has to deal with me or I must deal with it – only differently. One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity. (p. 58)

The respect for the otherness of nature implicit in such a process might in turn awaken new forms of solidarity with, and respect for, the otherness of the Other. It is then that nature is treated as a “Thou.” The seasonal changes and reciprocal relationality makes us witness this sense of otherness in children’s accounts.

“I like it in the spring.” Several children’s experience of the playground and play was mostly impacted by the seasonal change. Spring elicited a dialogue between nature and a unique sensibility to its poetics. Changes in the seasons opened up new avenues to discover the play-scape and promising functions of the landscape. An eighth grader commented, “I like it because in spring time when flowers are blooming you can sit under it and read, it is also calm and relaxing. Flower petals are falling down.” Additionally, an eighth grader voiced, “I like it in the spring because it is nice to sit out there and look. I like the flowers that are planted.” Similarly, a fourth grader wrote that she “likes playing in the springtime.” Sitting out in nature not only offered an opportunity to play, but with words like “sit out,” “look,” “calm,” and “relax,” most children feel a sense of well-being, peace, a space to clear their minds, contemplate, or observe the environment with keenness. Such places in natural settings offer a child restorative experiences, i.e., providing relief from daily hassles, feeling better, and getting things in perspective (Korpela et al., 2001; Owens, 1988)

However, the changes brought by the seasons are not always pleasant. Unlike the gentle wind that cuddles and tickles the child, the wind in its ferociousness can disrupt the child’s play. The rain, the snow, and the sun are hostile elements that resist a child’s play, introducing them to otherness in a different way: “The play structure leaks” and “The playground become slippery and muddy.” The rain with its wetness, the snow with its chills, forces me to acknowledge that nature is a sentient being like myself. To be touched by the rain is thus, at the same time, to

experience one's own tactility, one's own fluidity. And to see the world is also, at the same time, to experience oneself as visible, to feel oneself seen. I feel brushed by these forces of the world and yet it is not simply an object of my own subjective experience but with its distinct qualities, it maintains an otherness. Thus, nature is the "other" which changes the experience of the place for the child and subsequently the play that can happen there.

The hostile elements of nature force the child to seek refuge, a shelter that can shield one from the harshness or "otherness" of nature. In her search, a child evidently discovers the roof which gives mankind shelter from the rain and sun. As an eighth grader commented, she liked "the house because it's a place that isn't open, which is useful in the winter." A seventh grader commented, "It also gives some shade from the sun and rain." Another seventh grader explained, "It is also useful when it is a rainy/snowy day out. It also keeps us dry when it is raining." One is here reminded of Levinas (1961/1979), for whom the dwelling, while offering the enjoyment of contemplation and repose, also protects us from the otherness (destruction) of the elements. It is, however, a fragile and vulnerable protection in the recognition of night that gnaws on the window panes, or the rattle of thunder in the doorjambs and the weight of snow on a buckling roof; the self as separated and splendidly self-sufficient is threatened and interrupted thus.

"It makes me feel like a tree." The inter-relationality with nature is also captured in a child's pathic relation with the world. Pathic means the immediate or unmediated and pre-conceptual relation we have with the things of our world (Straus, 1996). Van Manen and Li (2002) describes pathic as sensibility, a felt sense of being in the world. There exists a close relation between the pathic experience and the mood of the lived body (Buytendijk, 1970). The pathically attuned body perceives the world in feeling or emotive modality. Children engage with

natural places in intuitive or pathic ways through their play and in their daily activities (Simms, 2008)



Ensemble voice 07, drawn by a first grader, captures this pathic relationality of her encounter with the tree. At first glance, one notices the anatomical figure, which makes one wonder if the child has drawn a human figure or an angel. It is not surprising the tree is referred to by children as the angel tree. The branches are drawn with bold black strokes and defined outlines, in contrast to the green, ill-defined contours that overpower and embrace the entire tree. It seems when the child encounters the tree, it is the branches that give the tree its form, even though the figure of the tree is encompassed by the greenness (or it is the greenness that enchants her towards the tree). The child (or the angel) is intertwined with the tree, smiling, touching, rather kissing the periphery of the trunk. The child touches the tree and is being touched by it. In the kissing of the angel tree one is left musing who kisses whom. The red stripes that appear like long hair blend in with the tree, and the legs and the hands (that looks like wings) convey the illusion that the child is flying as though high with joy. It is in this encounter with the angel tree

that the laws of gravity are suspended. With the legs and the hands floating in the air the mood appears to be elated, as if the child is swimming in the air— body floating in calm waters—being weightless. It is no doubt that metaphors of joy and bliss point to the air: paradise, being on cloud nine, to be flying high. The child expresses an affiliation and sense of relatedness, and connectedness to nature which is embedded in the ethics of care. Another sixth grader echoes this experience by commenting on her own intertwinement with the tree: “it makes me feel like a tree.” There exists an intimate relationship between the angel tree and children, it is cared for and it is personified. The child participates in the world with a sense of wonder and fundamental interconnectedness between herself and all that exists. This inter-relationality and yet otherness is what Merleau-Ponty (1968) understands as the flesh, or the collective “Flesh,” which signifies both “our flesh” and “the flesh of the world.” The flesh represents the reciprocal presence of embeddedness in the world and breaks the subject and object dichotomy. The tree sees us, and we recognize on a deeply felt level (not just intellectually) that our self and the world are fundamentally intertwined on a most basic level; that we are participants in the same collective field of being. As bodied being, the child can touch, hear, and taste the angel tree – only because they themselves are included in the field, and have their own textures, sounds, and tastes. As Abram (1996) says: “We might as well say that we are organs of this world, flesh of its flesh, and that the world is perceiving itself through us” (p. 68). Our bodies are extensions of the vast land of the world. In the presence of the angel tree, the fundamental interrelationship between the child and the natural world is illuminated. If the surroundings are experienced as alive then one’s actions become mindful and respectful.

“I am in another world.” The denseness and the shape of the tree made the “secret garden” or “fairy garden” a sanctuary for some children, a place of refuge for their dreams and

the imaginary. Naming it as a “secret” or “fairy garden” points to the existential essence of the place for the children (we are reminded by Mugerauer [1985] that language represents the features of the environment and the primary ways in which people inhabit it). Tuan (1991) comments that “the more descriptive the name, the more distinctive the place is to the namers” (p. 688). Naming a place is an important ritual in the psychological history of the place. While it is not clear how and who named the secret garden, the name speaks to the phenomenological



ways in which the children inhabited the space. The “secret garden” was not a secret from the adult community, in the sense that they did not know about it, but its secrecy resided in activities that happened inside. It was the infinite secretive possibilities that it evoked for the child that kept its mystical qualities alive. It was also the plants, flowers, and trees that afforded it the sense of being in “another world,” “being mystical,” a “fairy land.” An eighth grader expressed, “Plants and flowers there. In the spring when you are walking through it, it feels like a magical land.” Similarly, an eighth grader described the place as, “It’s almost like stepping into a new little world.” For another fifth grader, being in the secret world opened the possibility to be who she wanted to be. She said, “It’s like I’m in another world and I can just be who I want to be

there.” The enclosed space with trees hovering around offered the child the feeling of living in another world, offering a hidden space to be who she wanted to be.

For different children, this being who they wanted to be meant different possibilities and differed for children at different developmental stages. The multiple lived experiences that breathed in the secret garden were captured by one of the first graders: “Haunted forest—We pretend to have bows and arrows here. [...] We pretend to be squirrels here.” Thus, for the child, to be “who I want to be” in the midst of the “haunted forest” was to embody the squirrel, hold bows and arrows, and explore ways of being that remained hidden outside the forest. The mystical, the hiddenness, and other-worldly sense of the place invites the children to diverse possibilities, what Simms (2008) calls the plenum: “plenitude or fullness of the web of spatial presence” (p. 51). It was perhaps this hidden (concealed) aspect of the space that imbued the garden with a sense of mystery. It was “haunted” as the child called it, but this hauntedness was different than the one she experienced in the dark (e.g., fear of the monster in the closet or under the bed). In this secret garden, this hauntedness offered excitement and the promise of adventure. This known and unknown aspect of the space kept plenary promises of play that were “secret and hidden” from the adult’s objective life. Simms (2008) reminds us that plenum and play are interconnected. I wonder whether it is this concealment, this hiddenness, that gives the secret garden its name, since, encapsulated by trees and bushes, what can be lived, imagined, and played remains a quasi-secret even to the child. Perhaps it continued to be the mystical garden because it kept the promise of a renewed unknown, and of unforeseen, and infinite possibilities that could be discovered again and again.

In the haunted forest, the dichotomy of the real and the imagined blurred, as the space allowed the child to live the imagined. It was also in this forest, for some children, that real

fairies existed. A nursery child described the experience of being in the fairy garden: “The Fairy garden is the most beautiful space and real fairies live there.” Should we disregard children’s perception of mystical and magical as what Piaget called “magical realism,” in which the child is simply confused between the reality and fantasy? We find some clarity in Merleau-Ponty (1964), for whom the child’s consciousness is different and participates in the immediate world with no distinction between interiority and the external world. Of course, for the child, the real fairies existed, in the trees, the grass, and the branches, which cannot be seen by the cogito of the adult. The garden was alive in her stories and in her play. The child experienced the realness of the fairies in digging the sand, in the joy of “making good fairy traps in the sand pit” and in anticipation of catching the fairy. Abram (1996) proposes that magic “cultivates an ability to shift out of his or her common state of consciousness precisely in order to make contact with the other organic forms of sensitivity and awareness with which human existence is entwined” (p. 9). It is this magic that exists in the branches, that not only give the secret garden its haunted essence but can also be transformed into friendly “bows and arrows.” The magic of the space resided in the child’s experience of intertwinement and an ethics of care. For some children, this garden is not comprised of anonymous flowers, but what one child calls “the darling flowers.” Abram’s magic is precisely this heightened receptivity to the meaningful solicitations – songs, cries, gestures of the larger, more than human field. Magic is the experience of existing in a world made up of multiple intelligences or imagined possibilities. For Ogden (2007), the imaginary is the process of dreaming that brings oneself more fully into existence--in the fairy garden, “I can be who I want to be.”

Besides the denseness of the trees, the nooks and corners of the playground also became critical for their qualities of hiddenness. A fourth grader appreciated a stone pile as it afforded

the possibility for Hide and Seek. Some kindergarteners acknowledged the boulders, bushes, and trees for the same purpose. In Hide and Seek, the child hides from someone, yet keeps the presence of the other alive. Hide and Seek involves the mutual seeking of the other: seeing and being looked for. The pleasure and excitement of Hide and Seek is both the absence of your presence and awareness that you are being sought. Barritt, Beekman, and Mulderji (1983), in their phenomenology of Hide and Seek, comment “The child learns that there are more ways to look and learns that there are many ways in which you can be looked at” (p. 153). Hiding in the corner, there is a greater awareness of your own positionality in relation to the other, with one’s own corporality and identity; as Van Manen (1996) says, “even a stretched-out limb can betray you” (p.6). It is in the aloneness of being hidden that one can be safely with oneself in wonderment and daydreaming, and yet the desire is to be with everyone, to be together but alone.

Speaking of Found Places

I had chosen a habitation in this peaceful Vale...
For I found, beneath the roof of that perennial shade,
a cloistral place of refuge, with an unencumbered floor.

— William Wordsworth,
When to the Attractions of the Busy World (1888)

While several younger children found a place of refuge in the secret garden, for most of the eighth graders the quest to find a dwelling in an adult-controlled space was fulfilled in the yellow hut. Located at the corner of the Waldorf school, facing the road, the yellow hut became the refuge for some children to live friendship, exercise power, and to escape the demands of adults and the larger school community. Children at a certain developmental stage do claim spaces where they can shape a self, independent of the needs, desires, and expectations of others (Dovey, 1990; Langeveld, 1983; Sobel, 1993). The fundamental feature of these places is that

they are kept secret from the adult community. However, the yellow hut at the Waldorf school, while it contained children's desire for privacy, was not a secret place in the traditional sense of it being hidden from the adult community.

The yellow hut was known by the school's authorities, though it had become absent and invisible in the discourse of the school. The adults in the community often reiterated that they were not sure of the productivity and utility of the yellow hut in relation to the school grounds. Langeveld (1983) argues that it is through these abandoned and solitary spaces whose meaning and functionality are considered "indeterminate" and unstructured—mostly by adults—that children can find a sense of peace, contentment, and a certain measure of freedom to engage with the world as they choose. It is this quality of indeterminacy and abandonment by the adults in the Waldorf community that the yellow hut found its designation of it being a special "private" or "secret"¹⁶ space offering children autonomy, imaginative independence, and territorial control. The yellow hut was conceivably born or *reborn* as an assertion to transform that which was labelled as meaningless into a place that was meaningful to the children. The children re-territorialized the space that the adults were inclined to de-territorialize i.e., abandoned spaces that had lost economic, social, functional and psychological value for the adults and the community found a new signification, reclamation, and ownership by the children (Simms, 2014). Following Bachelard's topological analysis (1958/1969), this theme explores the spatial features of the yellow hut that elicited particular modes of feelings and ways of being that made the yellow hut into an ideal space for experiencing intimacy and identity development integral to adolescence. Ownership and control of the place was dependent on access: *Who was*

¹⁶ Van Manen's (1996) work on childhood secrets does emphasize a difference between secrecy and privacy, mainly the condition of relationality. I do not see such a demarcation in the data.

prohibited? Who was invited in? What can flourish in the hut that was not permitted outside these walls?

“I like to be with my friends.” The evocative account of most eighth and sixth graders highlighted that their favorite place, the yellow hut, fulfilled their desire to experience the intimacy of friendship and privacy. Privacy is most often understood as space to be alone without intrusion from others¹⁷ (Van Manen, 1996), however, for certain adolescents, aloneness in the yellow hut was defined not by isolation but sharing space with a significant friend with whom one formed intimate relations. A sixth grader expressed: “My friend and I played with a potato bug named Taty. I met a friend here. I used to play restaurant—I like the house.” Another eighth-grader voiced, “The house—gives me and my friends a place to hang out and play music. I get to be with my friends even just for the three minutes of recess we have.” Similarly, an eighth-grader commented, “It’s just a nice place to look forward to going out at recess.” It was the emergence of friendship and company of friends that gave the hut its special status¹⁸ as a “hangout” or a “meeting place.” Children were often in the company of closest friends and shared intimacies, arguments, discussions, and companionship that fostered trust and relationships in this private dwelling. Thus, while the yellow hut was a place to be alone, adolescents’ accounts allude to a different sense of aloneness, requiring the presence of the other not only in opposition, but in the formation of a group identity, a group of peers who are like me, who understand me.

A significant feature of the house that seemingly fostered this intimacy was that the yellow hut had a different temporal structure than clock time. The systematic division of time

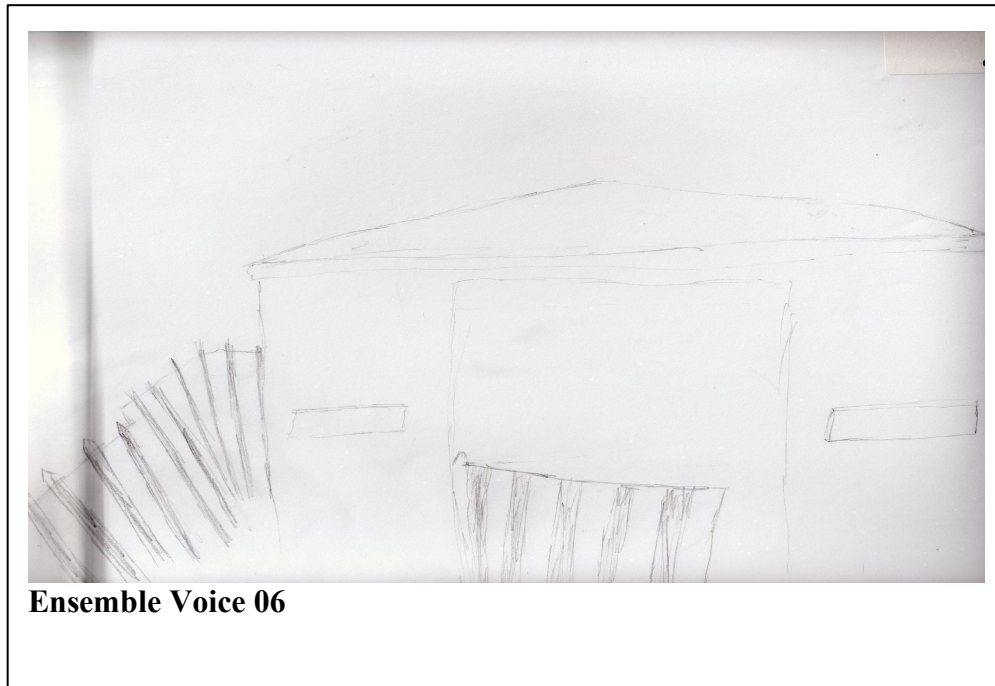
¹⁷ For Van Manen privacy not only closes off the possibility of close relations but also the possibility of any relation whatsoever.

¹⁸ It is also the quality of the hut with its four walls that protects, separates, and offers refuge.

into hours, minutes, and seconds was temporarily forgotten (e.g., “I forgot the time,” we say) and children could live a time structure that had little to no scope in the school structure. Children’s culture and friendship are mostly disciplined and ordered by the dominant instrument of the timetable that spatially and temporally monitor, isolate, and localize them (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). This left recess as the only designated time and the playground as the designated space where “safe” self-disclosure and intimacy of friendship flourished. In some children’s ensemble voices, they repeatedly emphasized the relationality between “time spent with friends” and “three minutes of recess” or “recess.” While recess time is decided by the curriculum time, its modality is often different: where and how to spend the time is mostly under the child’s control. They can choose to liberate, control, adopt, and decide their ways of being. Even though recess did not grant complete immunity from the invisible-visible surveillance of the school/adults, several children’s accounts communicated agency, a counter language to the dominant discourse of surveillance. In the four walls of the yellow hut they had found a space to live the deepest form of relationality with another. It was in this space that the clock time of the recess dissolved and an intimate lived time—three minutes—was experienced.

“little privacy from the outside/teachers/little kids” (Who is prohibited?). The yellow hut’s designation as a special place (refugee) required that the degree of control and agency over who is invited (i.e., access) and who can enter one’s “own place” was regulated and defined by the eighth graders. Finding a place of refuge is an intricate process that requires some protection from the unwelcome and uncontrolled presence of the others. Lieberg (1992 as cited in Kylin, 2003) notices that teenagers often establish uniqueness and identity through territorial control or gestures of manipulation called “landscape modifications” by Hart (1979). An eighth

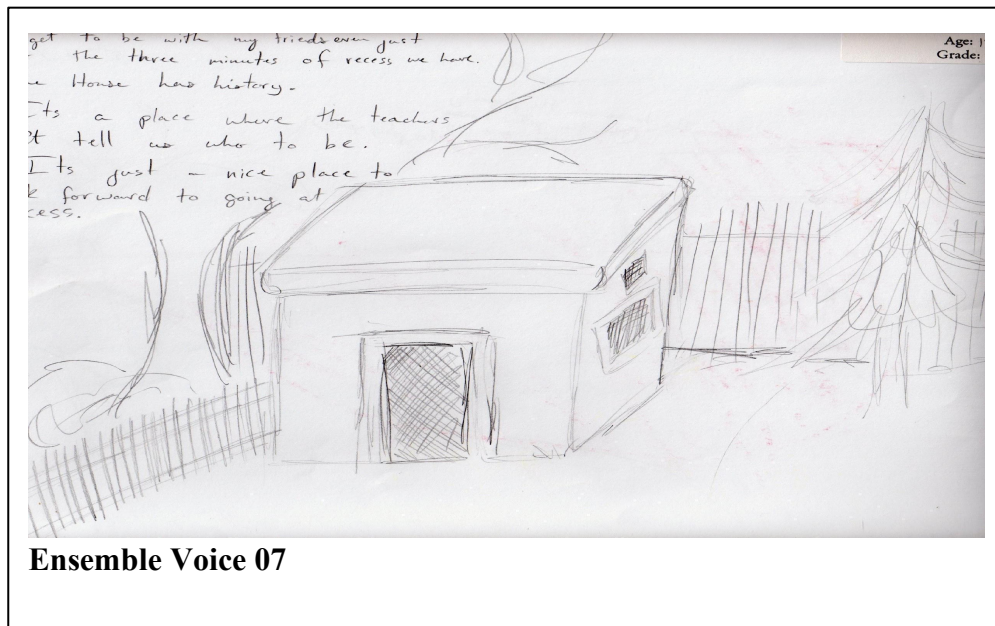
grader expressed this desire to control access or territorial control of the space in her Ensemble Voice 06.



With fences surrounding the yellow hut, the child communicated that this dwelling is protected and has deep foundations. Fences convey the desire of the child to possibly defend the spaces she has loved—keeping certain things in and other things out. The child drew a door that is open and permeable like the fence, and in her ensemble voice she¹⁹ wrote: “We need less ways to get in on that structure and a door.” With no handle or knob there is an uncertainty about who will close and who will open it. It seems the door can be opened both from the inside and outside, but it is

¹⁹ The gender of the child is not revealed in the ensemble voice, but I remind the reader of my earlier decision to use “she” as the dominant pronoun. I also want to confess that in my first draft, I had used the pronoun “he” and only corrected this error in my third revision. I bring this confession to the forefront of my work as it speaks to the absence of feminine existence and narrative even in our subconscious world. In shifting the pronoun from “he” to “she” I felt an internal turbulence towards the idea of a girl demanding privacy or a room of one’s own. I invite my readers to experience such strangeness, impact, fantasy, or pain that such gender reversal produces for them.

the child who chooses to open it or close it. The ensemble voice 07 drawn by another eighth grader, is clearly marked by fences, borders, boundaries, and gates and follows the similar thematic structure of ensemble voice 06.



The entrenched horizontal and vertical decorative lines created the illusion of the visible and the invisible, permeable and impermeable. The horizontal and the vertical lines (much like the fences) on the drawing of the hut above is very similar to “/” on another eighth grader’s ensemble voice who said, “The house is the best part because it’s one of the only places where there’s a little privacy from the outside/teachers/little kids.” The multiplying slashes (fences) both separate and blur the outside, the teacher, and the kids. The “slashes” and the slanting lines on the ensemble voice 07 are like the trespassing sign reminding outsiders “do not enter.” These outsiders, several younger children and also a few sixth graders, identified the yellow hut as a disliked place. They described the space as dirty and claustrophobic, and they found it problematic that teachers could not see students in and behind the structure. A sixth grader

commented “I don’t like how the teachers can’t see you.” Besides the younger children, an eighth grader also disliked the house for being hidden from the teachers. She said: “Its [...] the furthest place from the teachers.”²⁰ Thus, while the hut nurtured the well-being of some eighth graders, the inevitable structure of the hut kept the distance between the other and I. Or, as Bachelard (1958/1969) says, “space is nothing but a horrible outside-inside” (p. 218). However, this boundary of the outside and the inside is conceivably the very conditionality of home (self) for the adolescent. This boundedness and demarcation fostered by the yellow hut was a significant feature that designated the yellow hut as a separate and distinct space from all the other spaces that existed on the school grounds. The yellow hut was a space of congregation, a “hangout” place and not a play space. Through this social space numerous adolescents distinguish that their identity and their selfhood is different than other children on the playground, for whom place was defined by play-ability with things and equipment.

The teenagers instead inhabited a space where conversation, music, and secrets can be shared with friends. The yellow hut is a paradoxical blend of privacy and sociability, as the desired doors and fences drawn on ensemble voice 06 and 07 do not completely “shut out” or “close,” and the windows were drawn open to the “other.” Through the half door and the fences, the child offered something deep about the essence of privacy, refuge, and aloneness, which always involves the presence of the other. It is through the half door that the secrecy, sanctity, and specialness of the yellow hut was kept alive, encapsulating the child’s desire for both security and freedom. However, the entrance and access needed to be mostly controlled by the child without closing off the space completely.

²⁰ This outlier voice of the eighth grader prevents us from forming a single discourse that all eighth graders wanted a space away from the teachers.

“People can go to say what they want” (what can live inside the hut). Inside the yellow hut, children mainly desired to explore possibilities that perhaps could not be lived in an environment that is surveilled by the teachers, or where they need to be cautious in front of young children. The yellow hut became a sanctuary to share intimate conversation in the company of trusted friends. A sixth grader wrote: “I like behind the house because it is a private space to spy or converse.” Another eighth grader commented, “I like that I can say whatever I want to.” The privacy of the place was then marked by freedom of expression and also a demarcation on who was allowed to hear and who was forbidden from hearing. According to Nilsen (2005), having secrets with other children in outdoor play resembles the concept of “wellness”, allowing children to establish and re-establish relationships with each other as they control a physical space. Secrets, then, become the coins of intimacy. Van Manen (1996) says:

In intimate relations, both partners must feel a sense of sharing with the other in a special way they do with nobody else. In interpersonal relations, secrets are disclosed with care in a developing dialogue with others who can be trusted to share and respect them. (p. 67)

The children’s ensemble voice indicated that the most important feature of the house was that it was a resting place from the surveillance of the teacher. An eighth grader evoked the image of surveillance, privacy, and secrets in her powerful description: “I did like the privacy of the little house, it is a place where people can go to say what they want without the vulture-like teachers to loom over them and get mad over everything.” Vultures, with their keen eyes, hover around, vigilantly noticing a weakness, and are quick to attack the weak and the fragile. The child describes the experience of being looked at (i.e., surveilled by the other), being attacked (or feeling attacked), of being careful to speak (e.g., being watched or self-surveillance) in order to avoid making the teacher mad. One notices that speech is intimately tied to vision (surveillance).

In the lived experiences of being cautious to speak, one also feels being watched: “watch your tongue,” “keep a civil tongue in your head.” With the metaphor of the vulture, the child communicates the conflict between her desire for privacy and free and experimental speech, in contrast to the intrusive watchfulness by teachers. Teachers are experienced as tools of surveillance who police the body by disciplining the speech and actions on the grounds. Foucault (1979) reminds us that the body is both an object of power and target of power. The child learns that the ways to speak, what to speak, in whose presence one speaks, and one’s actions all have consequences. Thus, outside the yellow hut, the teachers can possibly keep an eye and the child’s body needs to be modified and policed or disciplined. The surveillance by the teachers often leads to the internalization of acceptable embodiment and the learning that uncensored speech and actions have consequences. The teacher appears to have the power to remove the child from the collective body of children or withdraw the privilege of play time. Children, like panoptical inmates, are not sure when they are under surveillance. They may be watched constantly, or they may not. The reality is that they are frequently watching themselves.

However, in the yellow hut the child feels free enough to speak and converse in a manner that is not scrutinized by the teachers. Following Bachelard’s topology we can understand how the yellow hut, with its firm and bare walls, but an interior that accommodates the contours of only few trusted adolescent bodies, provided a sense of being held and protected. The relatively close space of the yellow hut heightened a sense of intimacy and warmth. In this intimate space, one evidently cannot hide parts of oneself from the friends who can notice, but also can feel held and protected in each other’s vulnerabilities. It is no surprise that on the ensemble voice 07, the inside of the yellow hut is dominated by dark perpendicular lines crossing each other. These perpendicular crossing lines, called cross hatching, are drawn to convey darkness inside as a

contrast to the light outside. We can imagine that the darkness inside reveals the children's exploration of the self, the sense of being present to each other's experience, in all its darkness, pain, ambiguity, and complexity. It is in this yellow hut that the darkness of adolescent anxiety, sexuality, shame, power, confusion, ambiguity, love and hate can be shared. The process of identity formation involves, in part, uncovering and discovering oneself and exploring the dark corners of one's psychic life – witnessing secrets, and most importantly, witnessing these new intimate parts with a trusted other. It is this darkness (or indeterminate quality of the space) that allows adolescents to imagine, explore, and create new forms with each other. Van Manen (1996) says, "It is precisely when some part of the house assumes the indeterminate quality of secrecy that the child is permitted the experience of creative peace and quiet intimacy of his or her own familiar and yet secret self" (p. 25). Such a housedness provide the child a sense of feeling safe enough to retreat, descend, and engage in the process of discovering one's self and reimagining new forms of experiencing. The yellow hut envelopes their experience, offers a containment for formulation and transformation of their identity and freedom.

The four walls of the yellow hut offer the contained space for the child to make contact with their responses to the world, develop their imaginative capacities, and cultivate the felt experience of a "personal" life in a social space. The interiority of the adolescents is nourished, reflected and co-constructed in the presence of the other. The most important feature of the yellow hut is its capacity to sustain the aloneness of the relationality with *another*. Winnicott (1958) reminds us that our very capacity to be alone is a developmental achievement, possible only in the presence of the Other. It is this presence that fosters and guards, or fences, a safe space in which the child can be alone without intrusion, distraction, or watchfulness of the other (adults). Winnicott contends that this kind of non-intrusive containment allows the child to relax

and tune in to her own impulses and sensations, resulting in the cultivation of a personal experience. Similar work by Leston Havens (1989) can be relevant in our work with children. Envisioning the yellow hut as a safe space, perhaps like a therapy room, he advises to let the child (patient) be alone in the presence of a friend (therapist), who does not intrude upon the child's (patient's) emerging selfhood. This may help the child have the experience of the attentive but non-impinging environment that is a crucial foundation for the development of a selfhood. It is by the development of an intimate relationship and being mirrored by their friends in an empathic relationality that the adolescent's inner life develops.

The rustic and bare walls of the yellow hut also symbolize the demands of adolescent who prefer a more straightforward and authentic speech (and selfhood), than following customary cultural gestures of politeness. This emergence of free speech has the power of opening and experimenting with different ideas, selves, and phenomena. In allowing the non-surveilled speech to come out in the presence of the trusted other, the child learns that feelings, thoughts, and wishes—even those that are difficult—can possibly be named “without upsetting or maddening” the adult. A possibility of authentic speech and sharing becomes possible when the “teacher cannot see you” (sixth grader). Speech is an interpersonal event (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962). In this sharing, the “other” is entrusted the privileged position of hearing, protecting, and re-interpreting what is being said. It is then in and through the bare walls of the yellow hut that the child perhaps experiences the awareness of hiding, concealing, sheltering, protecting and thoughts and experiences with another.

It is also in this authentic speech that one conceivably discovers oneself. Language has the power to shape and structure our experience: evoking life into our existence or serving to close it. Humans do not merely use language as a tool; our very experience of our “selves” and

the world is formulated by language. It is through speech that thoughts come to life, speech moves thinking forward, and conversations orient us to others. The censored language for the teachers and young children can perhaps create rigid, unimaginative definitions of the self and world. Thus, the child learns the demarcation between his or her world, which is “inner,” and that which is “outer” (Van Manen, 1996, p. 8). The very experience of private speech opens possibilities of coming to inner awareness and self-knowledge as well as developing special interpersonal relations of intimacy. Perhaps that is also why, as adults, we may at times still long for this secret place and seek it in adventures of solitude so as to renew ourselves in a self-creating process.

“Where the teachers can’t tell us who to be.” While it was the uncensored speech and ways of being—alone with friends—that mostly gave some children a sense of freedom and allowed for an introduction to, and wrestling with, identity, the “telling” by the teachers familiarizes them to what they can or cannot be. An eighth-grader, in praise of the yellow hut, noted that “It’s a place where the teachers can’t tell us who to be.” It was also within the walls of the yellow hut that some children, mostly eighth graders, desired to mark a boundary, both literal and figural, of separation and differentiation from the identity provided and/or proscribed by the school and teachers. With the absence of the adults, the child can often explore, find meaning, and move away from the expectation of the adult. The child in search of her identity, mostly desires not being told who to be; she wishes to keep aside or give up social performances and expectations that have been ingrained in her. By giving up the expectation of others and constructing themselves in a new way, the child de-constructs and re-constructs herself. Thus, new modes of thinking, feeling, desiring, and relating can emerge. In the yellow hut, one feels sheltered to experiment with boundaries of self and to come home to one’s own self.

The yellow hut for some children also marked, or walled, a desire to differentiate and separate from the identity of the school. A fifth grader commented, “I like that it is further away and separate from school.” While the desire to separate is evident in the very structure of privacy, it is in this theme that one witnesses the process of intra-psychic separation and autonomy, what Blos (1967) calls the second individuation. For Blos, adolescence relinquishes the internalized other (e.g., the school) in order to develop a more mature sense of self. An eighth-grader appreciated the yellow hut because “it’s very honest and real and not overly beautified, which Waldorf tends to do.” It seems that the hut with its essence of “honest” and “real” introduces the child to experience the realness within, and not be controlled by the “decorative” standards of the school—that is, the “should” and “must” of being a student. The bare walls of the yellow hut are a seemingly necessary condition for relinquishing old images (expectation of adults) and clearing ground for new identities to take shape. Remember, the yellow hut is also the place where the teacher “cannot tell” her who to be: the child can possibly experience the realness of her own self.

The yellow hut, however, does not provide complete separation, but is located on the borderlands of the inside (school territory) and the outside (the road). It maintains the unity of the inside and the outside and keeps the interlink between the outside, or “the real world,” and the inside—one’s own self, while also maintaining a living connection to the boundary of the school. Or rather much like the safe base, it allows the child to safely wonder (wander) in the realm of the “beyond” within the shadows of the home. While the yellow hut provided shelter from several demands of the school life, some children appreciated that it introduced them to the outside, “real world.” An eighth grader said she liked the yellow hut “because it gives a little privacy and makes me connected to the outside real world. I like observing people that walk

past.” Another fifth grader commented, “I like that it is both indoors and outdoors. And it is not connected to the school.” Thus, the yellow hut is not only a shelter to escape from reality but rather becomes the stage for the process a child undertakes to move outward beyond the boundaries of the sheltered school life. The yellow hut, like the adolescent’s room, becomes a personal form and structure where exploration and fantasies of life’s future plan can dwell (Langeveld, 1983). It is the window of the yellow hut facing the road that pulls the child to a world outside.

At the borderland of conflict and empowerment. Why, exactly is a “house of one’s own” so important for children? What happens in that house? In that yellow hut, insulated from adult sophistication and control, children could find their own voice, their own imagination. The desire to have “a place of one’s own” or a house of one’s own is a radical one because it encapsulates the space beyond the adult’s desire and expectations of how the room (like the infant’s nursery) or play spaces should be and how the child needs to inhabit the space. Dovey (1987) beautifully articulates children’s desire to find a place in an adult world: “They need their own little places because the world isn’t giving them that anymore” (p. 24). There is some truth in Dovey’s assertion, as the desire to protect the yellow hut was often looked at with added scrutiny by the adult community. A general sense of suspicion prevailed towards the hut during the adult community meetings. A parent expressed this fear that was present in the margins. She said: “I would personally like the house to be torn. I do not trust older kids and it is very dangerous.” Macy narrated an incident that validated the adults’ concerns about the children’s safety in the house. She said “I went to go pick up my son [...] another child had picked up a large rock, probably like this big. And put in the window and was dropping it. And I’m like, stop. It just missed a child. Just by inches. And the teacher can’t see that’s happening because you can’t see

that there's children sitting back in there." Macy's account brings forth that children's hidden and uncensored play can sometimes incline towards "physical harm and destruction" (Simms, 2014, p.246). However, it is also true that unpoliced and uncensored play is also the very conditionality of play. Through uncensored play, the child experiences that as much as bodily action can result in pleasure, its action can also harm oneself and the other. Children can possibly develop a capacity for examination and reflectiveness of their own actions. A similar conception can be thought for places: as much as places and houses provide safety, they also engender dangerous possibility. Even though the dwelling protects us from heat, cold, rain, thieves, there is always a possibility of the danger of the outside intruding in. It is also true that sometimes the danger (vulnerability) lurks *inside* the yellow hut: the possibility of discovering oneself or having an argument with the beloved friend. The yellow hut was a dangerous place as intimate lives and intimate play is by necessity not always safe. However, hijacking or removing these places from the school grounds can prevent children from confronting and working through the danger that lurks in the places, in themselves, in friendship, and in the world.

Moreover, the usage of the word "danger" by the parents possibly speaks to the way a teenager's desire for friendship and privacy is often seen through the suspicious adult's lens of "delinquency" and "anarchy." Valentine (1996) highlights that teens often struggle to find a real entitlement in the public realm where their desire for solitude and autonomy are fueled with fears that teenagers are an unruly threat. The yellow hut became a site where some adults' suspicious discourse of delinquency of teenagers and their scrutiny of "indeterminate" spaces intertwined. Places call for sense-meaning, and it is this meaning-making capacity that informs our interactions with places (Langeveld, 1983; Simms, 2014). However, places always have qualities that transcend and resist the reductive androcentric gaze. These transcending qualities, or what is

experienced as hiddenness or emptiness (Langeveld, 1983) of the space is also a source for our fears. Places can become threatening and confusing “as soon as our sense-making productivity stops” (Langeveld, as cited in Simms, 2014, p. 244). The yellow hut as a structure had lost its meaning in the discourse of the adult community. The adults were not sure of the productivity and meaning of this structure in the gestalt of the school grounds. This meaninglessness and indeterminacy in the eyes of the adults made the hut a perfect space for inhabitation by the adolescent community. It also made the yellow hut a sort of Rorschach for projecting and merging the suspicion towards the independence of adolescents (e.g., “I do not trust the older kids”) and the suspicion towards the hut (e.g., “I do not know what happens inside the hut”).

During the community meetings, the responses of some adults towards the yellow hut (e.g., “we do not know what to do with it”) paralleled the responses to the teenagers. As adults, we are often confused about our relationality with the adolescent community: they are not young enough to need our protection, but not adult enough that we can grant them complete independence. They defy our control, they are vocal about wanting their autonomy (though perhaps ambivalent about complete independence), and thus *we as adults often do not know what to do with them*. While only some parents in the Child-Map Study reported a sense of suspicion towards the adolescent community, such perceptions and discourses can possibly control children’s friendship and their desire to find a place. With words like “tearing down” and “dangerous,” adults evidently communicated a general consensus that replacing and renovating the yellow hut was a pressing need. However, some adults’ desire and conception of safety intertwined with the idea of surveillance (i.e., if parents and teachers can watch, then nothing dangerous can happen) conflicted with several children’s desire to escape the adult world. Moreover, the words “safety of children” have been historically relevant in the creation of parks

and schools that controlled and tamed children, preventing them from “loitering.” Such loitering often resulted in resistance movement considered to be threatening to the governing class (Kozlovsky, 2008). Indeed, inside the enclosed space of the yellow hut flourished friendship and cohesiveness that was dangerous to the adult system.

Another possible danger lurking in adolescents’ desire to have an intimate life is sexuality. The parents’ narratives which were besieged with suspicion, mistrust, and the desire for surveillance on the activities inside the yellow hut, and which were also reflected in their diverse questions that reiterated a unitary thematic query— “I am not sure what happens inside the house”— seemingly hinted at the perceived risks of sexuality in adolescents’ life. It is important to reflect that in North America and possibly in other parts of the world, the conversations about sexuality are often structured around crises: teenage pregnancy, AIDS, STIs, sexual orientation (process of coming out or high rates of LGBTQ suicide), and sexual assault and harassment (Gilbert, 2014). These crises-oriented accounts can often reduce sexual experience into statistics and scientific facts, thus failing to capture the affective experience of our sexual lives. These real and perceived threats can possibly structure the agenda and dialogue about teenage sexuality through a limited lens of moral panic or health: abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education (Gilbert, 2014). Both these approaches contextualize adolescents’ sexuality as a risk that needs to be mitigated by adults and education systems. In such an ideological system, the teenager’s curiosity and desire about their and other’s sexuality might be met by an adult with a monologue comment “no”—or “not yet” or “not like that” (Gilbert, 2014).” In our parent’s negative estimations of the yellow hut, (“the hut needs to be torn”) we can possibly understand that adolescent’s desire for privacy and sexuality might be defined by what adults want to eradicate rather than what desire is to be promoted or lived.

Thus, when adolescent's sexuality is only described in the context of crises, trusting adolescents to think for themselves or granting them a room of their own can feel like a risk, where the consequences are too high. Standing at the corner of the school²¹, almost at the periphery or outside of the discourse of the school, the yellow hut seemingly also symbolized sexuality that exist outside of an education system, sometimes even an interruption to it.²² Yet, adolescents' desire to preserve their yellow hut (their identity and sexuality) required thinking and thoughtfulness which cannot be shaped into obedience, rather: "Thinking is moored to love, hate, loss, and disappointment— [contain] the emotional geography of our sexual lives" (Gilbert, 2014, p.65). Gilbert (2014) provides some solution to our dilemma of encountering and responding thoughtfully to adolescent's sexuality. Adopting Bion's conception of thinking²³ and thoughtfulness, Gilbert understands that dialogue around sexuality needs to move away from management of thinking and actions (What needs to be stopped and controlled), to creating a capacity to think about oneself and other. Such an introduction of thoughtfulness and thinking about sexuality that can create an intergenerational dialogue both between and among parents,

²¹ The yellow hut appears to be a foreign or a fallen place in the object of the school, but it is this foreignness Derrida (1999) reminds us returns to us our own foreignness. In opening the door of the yellow hut is also opening of the door in the school and adult's system to what is foreign or strange to self. Thus, sexuality or adolescent sexuality can also be a foreignness and ambiguity that resides within each of us— our own tentative, doubt, passion, loss unknowing experiences of sexual experimentation as a youth; and the passions and disappointments of adult sexuality.

²³ Bion (1984) states that the parents not only contain baby's ambiguity, anxiety, feelings, perceptions, and sensations but also think, digest, transform, mitigate intolerable experiences. This receptivity or mother's capacity to think thoughtfully about baby's experience (reverie) and returning it back with love and care is internalized by the baby and foster's baby's potential for thinking and ambiguity. For Bion, this thoughtfulness by the caretaker creates "K" (which is distinct from knowledge of facts) that is a capacity to tolerate complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty in the baby.

teachers, and education by facilitating conversations that not only risk adults' expertise, but asks them to remember that sexuality confuses, conceals simplicity, and complicates a wish to know factual answers. Sexuality is not merely a cognitive domain but an affective experience. Gilbert (2014) beautifully suggests that teachers and adults can say – "I am thinking about you, and in this thinking I am offering to you my own capacity for thoughtfulness" (p. 74). It is also important to state that this intergenerational intimate dialogue does not require adults to imitate adolescents or use "teenager slang", but it is important they communicate in ways that understand adolescents' experiences, the demands that surround them, to offer genuine choices that preserve and empower their freedom and power.

Of course, most eighth graders, in hearing that the adults were speculating on removing the yellow hut, exercised their freedom by unanimously demanding that the hut should be preserved in its present state. They organized their own resistance movement by deciding to put their green pins at the yellow hut on the child map, and they voiced the emotional significance of the house in the ensemble voice. Such critical voices questioned and challenged the adults who were largely in favor of tearing down the hut for something new and meaningful from the adult's perspective. Demarcating a space of one's own—an act of separation—involves drawing a line. This line-drawing may be understood as a countercultural practice or an act of what becomes labelled as teenage resistance. But, it is a form of resistance against the expectation that children's and adolescent's worlds are to be available for everyone to access lest their privacy result in something delinquent. Inhabiting a place of one's own is not only an act of resistance or saying no; it is also a movement toward making space for something new. It is learning to inhabit space differently—how to be with oneself, others, and things differently.

The presence of these adolescent voices to their meaningful experience of the hut became an important counter-voice to the adult aspiration to deterritorialize the hut. However, it also opened the adult community to the intimate lives and emotions that existed in the yellow hut. Thus, I re-iterate that these voices were “dangerous” to the adult system, but this being dangerous was *transformative* as it opened adults to a discourse that was different than their own. It questioned their sole authority to be the knowers and deciders of “what is good for the children.” Such a resistance by the children, even though counterproductive to the adult agenda, concludes that resistance to a system is not always detrimental. During the community meetings, adults were open, receptive, and empathic to children’s desires for privacy and made several suggestions to foster privacy of young adolescent without the intrusion of the adult gaze. This hearing of children’s voices fostered a political empowerment that did not simply render the adults (dominant other) as indifferent to children’s desire, but created a hospitable space for adolescents’ voices to be heard.

“I feel trapped within a shell of people.”

And then, onto what, toward what, do doors open? Do they open for the world of men, or
for the world of solitude?

— Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 1958/1969

Our above understanding of several children’s shared experience of place might make us falsely conclude that all children enjoy the company of others all the time. However, at the margins of the playground rested other voices that desired solitude. Some children vocalized yearning for places that can offer them refuge from their peers and the heightened experiences of being in the playground. A sixth grader voiced, “Too many people and too much drama. I feel trapped within a shell of people.” Another eighth grader expressed, “The children seem to never cease

screaming. I just wish I could go somewhere quiet during recess.” In both of these narratives, children brought forward the intense embodied experience of being with other children. The child compares it to being in a shell – feeling tiny, shrinking, withdrawn, or trapped in between emotions and screams. The child is also desiring to find a shell—a place that is quieter and offers solitude from the intensity and intimacy of being with others. As Bachelard (1958/1969) says, “A creature that hides and withdraws into its shell, is preparing a way out” (p. 108). In the screams and loudness of the playground, some children desired solitude to read, daydream, or relax. A parent of a nursery grader mentioned that, “he really likes to find remote places where he can just go and sit by himself.” Another eighth grader appreciated the wishing tree: “You can sit under it and read. It is calm and relaxing.” Children desired nooks and corners where they could be shielded from the screams, play, and emotions present in the playground. In reading, solitude, and daydreaming the child desires distance from peers and adults. The world of the playground becomes overwhelming, and it is the abandonment of the play with the other or finding a room to breathe from the screams. The child desires a silent spot to restore, to be calm, and relax.

While being alone might be seen negatively in our culture, the child offers the wisdom of having places of silence in the playground that can provide them refuge. In both sitting and reading, a child can daydream and discover interiority. Reading also allows a child to have private dialogue with the author (Simms, 2010). Reading and sitting offer another precious psychological value to humanity: immobility. In praising the corner, Bachelard (1958/1969) comments that it is these secluded spaces that the child desires, that introduce them to immobility: “To begin with, the corner is a haven that ensures us one of the things we prize most highly—immobility” (p. 137). These few minutes of aloneness with oneself are also the necessary condition with which one can move outside, being able to tolerate aloneness in the

outer world. Sitting in the corner in the shade of the tree, the child desires immobility, the psychological freedom of an undisturbed encounter with oneself. In sitting in the corner, the child also develops the capacity to be alone—a psychological milestone—and to be with her own thoughts. She is out in a public space yet in her own private space at the same time.

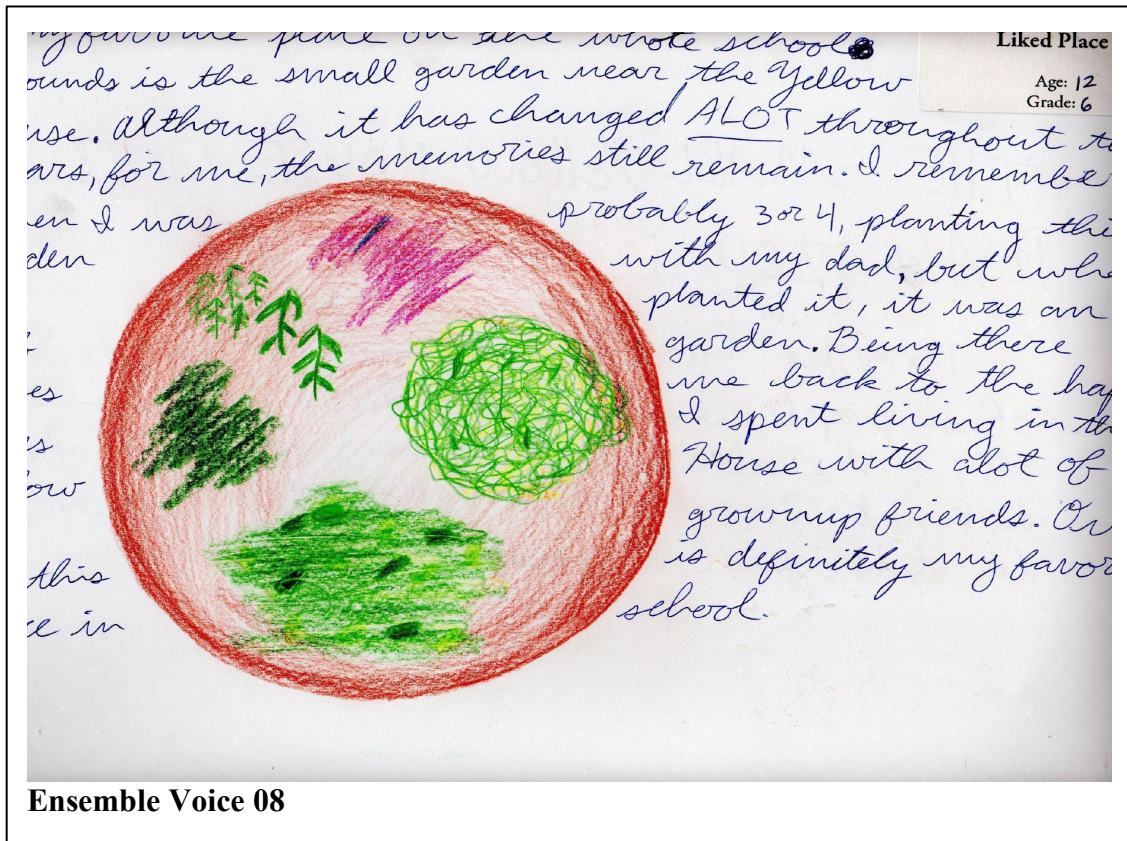
Speaking from Remembered Places

“It has many memories.” Places on the playground also became important for some children as within them resided their memories and an avenue to go back and be reminded: of people, emotions, and events. Most literature on place memories have used adult environmental autobiography (Chawla, 1986; Cobb, 1959; Helphand, 1979; Horwitz, Klein, Paxson, & Rivlin, 1978; Marcus, 1978) or adult memories to understand the value of childhood places, places of refuge and imagination (Dovey, 1990) and the cognitive functions these places served (Morgan, 2010). Literature has relied on memories largely as an instrument to understand the significance or functionality of childhood places, and have mostly depended on adult data to understand childhood.²⁴ The Child-Map Study at the Waldorf school, in its engagement with the ensemble voices of children, adds this very absent child voice to understand the intimate relationality of places and memories, providing insights on how places become significant as placeholders for our memories. A sixth grader describes how the front step became a safe holder of her memories: “Front steps of the school because it has many memories.” To be on the front steps was to (re)live and access all the memories that are alive in that area. Past and present dwell in that place. Simms (2008), in her study in a local Pittsburgh neighborhood, notices that anchoring childhood memories to location and places made recall easier and more detailed.

²⁴ This reliance on adult memories might reflect that children’s memories are considered to be unreliable and untrusted.

Bachelard (1958/1969) reminds us that houses are valued refuges to our memories, and all our lives we can come back to them. The yellow hut became an important area where memories resided for three sixth graders and a seventh grader. A sixth grader articulated, “The hut because I’ve made wonderful memories in there with some friends. And when I was little my friends and I would jump off the rock pile.” Another expressed, “Best memories from when I was little in this playground—hiding in the house there, making a potato bug friends in the sandy corner, and angering the dog next door.” To be in the house is to re-experience the “wonderful memories” of intimacy with friends, the joy of the jump, the thrill of angering the dog, and the smiles and laughter shared in the space. It is important to also note that memories were usually in the presence of the “other,” contributing to friendship and intimacy and evoking nostalgic affection or what Chawla (1990) calls the “ecstatic we.” While most literature (Chawla, 1990, 1996; Dovey, 1990) on place attachment (i.e., an experience of affectionate bond to a place; Morgan, 2010) has emphasized that an individual forms strong bonds with places that are experienced as solitary, our research points otherwise.

The desire to preserve and encapsulate the memories lived with the “other” was captured by a sixth grader. On ensemble voice 08, she drew an enclosed round circle in which she wrote: “Although it has changed alot throughout the years, for me, the memories still remain. I remember, I was probably 3 or 4, planting trees with my dad, but when I planted, it was an herb garden. Being there takes me back to that happy time I spent living in the place.”



With strong and bold red boundaries, the circle leaves no room to filter in or filter out; the child seems to capture a desire to safeguard the memory of the place. Inside of the circle, the child maintains the separation of each figure. Although the boundaries of the garden or green spaces are blurry and the leaves are bolded with impression, none of the figures touch one another. The child underlines and capitalizes “ALOT” reminding the reader that despite its change the child is able to preserve the authenticity of the experience. In being at the place, the child remembers the changes, that it was an herb garden, but also the sameness that being in the place evokes— the same experience of being happy with her father can be lived by her. In the circle, the memory consolidated, holding different forms and different arenas of her life. Places as holders of memories also carry our previous ways of being (identities). A mother of a five-year-old expressed that even when the child had no recollection of playing in this space, for

the mother the jungle gym in the school was an important place because for her, it carried the childhood of her child: “she was a baby there” and “she had her first experience of playing upside down.” Bachelard (1958/1969) says, “At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the beings.” Thus, the memories localized in spaces go beyond deterministic dates and are rather engraved by the intimacy of experience with self and others.

“I have gained, lost, laughed, cried.” Places and memories were interwoven by the feelings of personal histories they evoked for the child. Being in the place was to be re-connected with the original sensory experience of the place and re-experiencing the original feelings as they spoke. While some children simply mentioned “good memories” or “many memories” as indicators of why the place was important, others commented on the feelings that places evoked for them. Morgan (2010) also notes pleasure as an important criterion for place attachment in adults. While some children expressed feelings of joy and pleasure, others commented on grief and loss. A seventh grader provided a phenomenological experience of the range of feelings lived in these memories: “Over the past four years, I have gained, lost, laughed, cried, and simply done everything in that hut.” The most intense expressions of emotion were also those of grief. A sixth grader commented, “I dislike this place because it reminds me of people who have left our class who were very kind.” To be in the place then is to be reminded of friends with whom experiences were shared, who are no longer present, and whose memories bring loss for what cannot be created in the future.

Thus, places and memories were also tied in the elements of historicity. Of course, this reference to history is not to a linear past. The past is always tied into the future and future always into a present, as Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) notes:

The present still holds in its hands, [...] the immediate past, and since the latter retains in the same way the past immediately preceding it, elapsed time is entirely appropriated and grasped in the present. The same is true of the imminent future, which will also have its horizon of imminent futurity. (p.74)

The historicity was captured not only in reference to colleagues and memories that were known but also towards the absent other. A sixth grader captured this essence: “a room that echoes voices of children from long ago. It has a sense of being home to thousands of memories, including mine.” To be in these spaces was not just to be welcomed by moods and stories of people known, but also to people who have lived there timelessly and to be inculcated and enveloped and feel safe that one would also reside here forever. This sense of forever was captured by a child who expressed that “the house has history.” In hearing these descriptions, I was struck by the image of a monument; it felt that despite the echoes of “how we can make this playground better” one was also confronted with the question of what the playground captures, embodies, embraces—and what lives there in timelessness. The playground did stand like a monument which captured stories, moods, agelessness, and lifetimes that the children voiced needed to be protected. With the image of history, one is also posed with the questions of how to protect the historicity and what kind of renovation can preserve this history. When one visits a monument, the culture, traditions, folklores, and people of the place come alive and speak to us in new ways.

I was taken aback with these questions to my own childhood places—my first playground, my first neighborhood, and the thousand memories, stories, and emotions they carry. Even though my family moved to a “better” neighborhood, a “better” home, I felt my being belonged to those lanes. For years, I realized that in my dreams my new house and its street

never found a place, it was only the first streets of my childhood that became an important narrative to work through the psychological play of my life. Yet, in the presence of the change and renovation at the Waldorf School, the fear of losing these memories is real. During a recent visit to my primary school, I felt loss and mourning, witnessing how the renovation had erased the playful strokes of my childhood. Children at the Waldorf school also expressed the feeling of anger, mourning, and frustration if places valuable to them were renovated. An eighth grader expressed the sense of anger towards renovation as “I will be really mad/sad if they knock it down.” Another seventh grader asserted, “I think that the hut should be preserved in current states, with no renovations.” The word “preserved” is in strong resonance with my earlier association of the monument. With the usage of the word “preserved,” the image of the monument comes alive as one realizes that these were not just places of childhood but historical sites, and much like a monument, they captured the history, stories, and customs of lifetimes. These places carried the childhood landscape of not only these children but also children of the past who played, who laughed, who cried. To renovate is to take away an era, a laugh, and an emotion. Thus, in sharing their stories children had entrusted us with a huge responsibility of what it means to inhabit a space and to experience the renovations that these spaces would have for them. One is reminded here of Simms’s (2008) evocative story of the impact that selling the family car had on her young son, who cried “you sold my memories” (p. 150). For the child, memory is not a cognitive phenomenon but resides in places and things. To sell the car, or renovate the playground for a better future, also implies a fear of what might survive and what would be lost.

Chapter 4: Transformative Aspects of the Research Process

Embedded Walk: A Walk Back to Things Themselves

The Child-Map project invited the parents of children from preschool to fourth grade to walk with their children in the familiar Waldorf play spaces. While they had walked, played, and explored these play spaces before, the Child-Map study required them to “re-enter” as guests into their children’s lifeworlds. The parents entered where their children were naturally engaged in their world and questioned what was most commonly taken for granted and what concerned their children most ordinarily, or as phenomenologists say, they went *back to things themselves*.

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1968) states that turning to the phenomena of lived experience means re-learning to look at the world or to take a walk back into the everyday. While research always has elements of walking—searching again, anew, going about again, or circling around, Gardiner (2009) asserts, “we cannot simply ‘go to’ the everyday; as we are ‘always-already’ immersed in it” (p. 385). Thus, the re-entry into the everyday life of the children required a different stance—a distinctive *time*, distinctive *space*, and distinctive *structure*, which called for an altered way of being.

Framework: Meandering on Well-Defined Paths

In this chapter, I present the thematically arranged narratives of the five mothers (given the pseudonyms of Allison, Macy, Liz, Annie, and Kathy) whom I interviewed. These themes emerged through my application of the aforementioned Van Manen (1990) and Burman and MacLure (2005) method. The thematic narratives capture the mothers’ experiences of taking this *embedded walk* with their children, which addresses the first query of this dissertation, i.e., exploring the processes that fostered transformation in the lifeworld of parents and children. This chapter questions the ways in which *different* ways of being facilitate the children’s ability to

speak, and similarly, for the mothers to listen *differently*. In the study, many mothers used the words “good framework” or “frame” to capture the “different” orientation, intentionality, structure, and process that the embedded walk fostered for them.

The word “framework” is popular in psychotherapeutic literature to describe the therapeutic environment and the implicit and explicit rules and practices that create the context in which everyday experiences can be explored and understood. For Langs (1979), frameworks are metaphors that:

create a distinctive set of conditions within the frame that differentiate it in actuality and functionality from the conditions outside the frame. The metaphor requires, however, an appreciation of the human qualities of the frame and should not be used to develop an inanimate or overly rigid conception. (p. 540)

Thus, while the language of rules and instructions can delude us into believing that frames are mostly about rigid and fixed rules, Langs’ (1979) call for human qualities is an assertion that frames are fluid, dynamic, and unique. The definition of the frame in therapeutic literature is helpful for understanding the practices, the conditions, and the structure that the embedded walk provided, which marked it as different from a casual meandering in the Waldorf play spaces. Without a distinctive and clear path, it would have been difficult for the parents to enter the lived experience of their children.

From this perspective, the frame gave both intentionality and structure to the embedded walk. The adaptable instructions on the parents’ packet marked the trails for what to notice and how to follow the footprints of their children’s world. Consequently, the frame of the walk cultivated a structure to define where attention is to be directed, how one needs to listen, and what can be listened to. This *distinctiveness* from daily life that the embedded walk provided is

the focus of this chapter. I unpack it through my emerged themes: distinctive time (*“When is a good time to do it?”*; *“Take out time”*); distinctive intentionality (*“Glimpse of their life”*); distinctive realities (*“I have my parent eyes on... I put on Y’s eyes”*); distinctive receptivity (*“They saw it with new eyes”*); distinctive ways of asking (*“We don’t get answers to questions”*); distinctive ways of listening (*listen to me”*; *“record their thoughts”*); distinctive spaces (*“School became bigger”*); and *distinctive forms of resistance* (*“This is not interesting to me”*; *did not have a good response*). Besides the call for “distinction,” the frame also provided the space and contextuality to hear voices that have been silent, and also those that have been so strong that they have silenced other voices and a diverse definition of an experience.

Each theme explores the personal stories of the transformation mothers (parents) and children experienced during and after the embedded walk. For some the changes were subtle, while for others the impact was significant. Each mother, however, experienced some noticeable shift in her everyday life through the embedded walk. Further, in my commitment to adopting a critical lens, these themes and narratives were carefully deconstructed to explore the power structures that operate even in research intending to be empowering. A critical deconstruction is not intended to undermine the research interventions or insights, but rather to begin to address the complexity of the power structures which make up our world.

Each of the themes are presented linearly following the ways of orientation and the shift in consciousness that parents adopted and underwent during the embedded walk. Such an arrangement was made to facilitate a simpler reading and preserve the narrative quality of the analysis. However, I do acknowledge that in the field, research processes happened simultaneously and non-linearly. The emphasis on each part varies from theme to theme. Each theme and each story is highly specific and unique to each person, and I try to restore these

unique contextual voices in writing my analysis to honor the diversity of voices that co-exist in my research. These are my well-demarcated paths to navigate the embedded (political) walk of this section; however, my analysis remains acutely sensitive to meanderings and wandering as footsteps to bring the multiplicity of political voices. With this ethos, I now put forward the themes to unpack the transformative impact of the embedded walk.

Theme: Distinctive Time

“All will become clear in the fullness of time”

— Alice through the looking glass, 2016

“When is a good time to do it?” Whether it be for psychotherapy appointments, running, or contemplative practices, we frequently find ourselves flipping through our calendars, struggling to set aside time that can grant us presence to each day. Even though most mothers mentioned the desire to be actively present to the worlds of their children, they also found themselves battling against the routine way of living time that overpowered, alienated, and estranged them from becoming present and alive to the “everyday” world around them. Kathy captured the paradox of yearning to be present to her 7-year-old son while struggling with her time slipping away. She stated, “I want to be present but there is not enough time or it’s too short.” Liz expressed a similar difficulty with desiring attentive time with her 5-year-old daughter but feeling guilty or overwhelmed by not having enough time: “I struggle about this. Getting everything accomplished and not having enough time.” Liz and Kathy’s accounts seem to capture how the characteristics of time or the clock can be a source of authority and oftentimes anxiety, as it seems all too readily that there is not enough time, or that they are not being efficiently productive within the allotted amount of time. In our contemporary world, the clock governs temporal phenomena. From the omnipresent clock on the bedside to the watch resting on

our wrists, time with its rushing hands has become a tool that not only structures our lives and rushes us into experience, but also reminds us of not having “enough time.” It can also be presumed that the language of “not having time” or “enough time” in Liz and Kathy’s temporal experience helps us comprehend that most often time gets reduced to a commodity and an economic resource in our contemporary world. When time gets regarded as a scarcity in a social structure, it seems obvious that individuals are compelled to rigorously budget this valuable resource, and therefore to choose, hierarchize, and prioritize *tasks*.

In struggling to manage the valuable resource of time, most parents’ responses in the project appeared to indicate that they felt so overwhelmed by the demands of their overbooked schedules, that they seemingly struggled with being attentive to their own world and bodily desires, which consequentially left them with little time to appreciate and attend to their children’s time and world. Kathy articulated that when she picked up her child after work, she was swamped by hunger and tiredness. She did not have the capacity (time) to listen to her child, as her body’s desires rest in the future in the comfort of the home: “I am tired. It’s been long and I just want to go home. I’m hungry today, I want to be home early today [...] When is a good time? He goes to after care so when we pick him up from aftercare I’m usually starved I want to get home.” The industrialized time evidently left mothers perpetually living one-step ahead. Allison conveyed a similar exhaustion, stating that picking up her 7-year-old daughter after school was a time of “Tiredness. Gosh, can we go? I’m getting hungry.” Their bodies were regulated by the rhythms of industrial imperatives that left minimal time for them to rest, eat a snack, or “breathe”. Their personal desires and bodily appetite most often had to be alienated in the workspace. This alienation and control of bodily desires at the workplace can be considered an effect of work (industrial) time. Thompson (1967) asserts that in an industrial capitalistic

system, time is carefully controlled. Such a careful adherence to industrial time then becomes imperative in organizing and controlling the daily cycles of the workers by the needs and demands of those in power. The rhythms produced under such circumstances, even though they appear natural, are actually controlled by the capitalistic time of those in power. From birth, socialization and clock time begins to shape the rhythms of the organism (eating, sleeping, excretion times, etc.) (Fuchs, 2001), meaning that the rhythms regulated under these circumstances tend to be rigid and prescribed with little room for individual subjectivity and spontaneity.

As observed in Allison's and Kathy's accounts, the hegemonic clock times perhaps forced them to forget or delay their desires to rest and eat to a future-oriented time. In the context of a capitalist society, mothers were often reduced to disembodied and disengaged subjects. With the externally imposed structure, parents' bodies were forced to conform to a pre-established template that gradually seemed to be more natural and habitual. When each returned exhausted from work to pick up her child, the present time with her child was overpowered by the demands (fatigue and hunger) of her body, to which it was seemingly difficult to be attuned and attentive during working hours. It is important to distinguish that while philosophers such as Minkowski (1970) privilege a future orientation of time in a human lived experience, the future orientation that parents described was a product of a consumerist, capitalist society.

The interconnected nature of children and parents' (mothers) lives also means that this future-based, linear orientation to time impacted, controlled and inadvertently dismissed the children's time and desire to play or be heard. Kathy explained that after a long day at work, she sometimes did not have the energy to be attentive to her child. While she acknowledged the importance of listening to him, she also found herself struggling to be attentive (given her

exhaustion) and available to listen to him. She stated, “I am tired after work, so sometimes I tell him yes, sometimes I tell him no. I don’t have the mind to fully listen to him.” After the working hours, the undetermined “parent’s leisure time” presented parents with a fleeting opportunity to experience and exercise control over their own time, whose unfolding was determined by them. Having the ability to choose what to do with their time was considered a rarity and privilege in structured industrial time. Nevertheless, this ownership of their time that was marginalized in the workspace confronted them with a new dilemma of exercising control over their children’s time and their world by saying a “yes or no.” Interestingly, Kathy did acknowledge that her child’s voice is significant, but the decision to pause, listen, and hear often rested in her hands. The unintentional consequence of such a hierarchizing of time was that attention and the receptivity of the child’s world was considered to be significant, but that which could also be paused until important parent desires and tasks were addressed or no longer caused distraction.

Mothers’ narratives bring forth the impact of clock time and the hegemony of parents’ time, which highlight that most often power is involved in the concept and practice of time. Children might learn that in order to be heard, their voice needs to wait, to be delayed, and to be spoken according to the adult’s convenience. Waiting itself embodies a power structure. Schwartz (1974) says, “To be kept waiting, especially to be kept waiting an unusually long while, is to be the subject of an assertion that one’s own time (and, therefore, one’s social worth) is less valuable than the time and worth of the one who imposes the wait” (p. 856). What and whose time is prioritized speaks to the socio-political status of the subject. Such a social structure dictates priority in which children’s (others) needs are to be satisfied. It is through being asked to wait to speak until after school hours, to delay talking about their experiences until their parents have the energy to listen, that the child might learn that parents’ time and their tasks are regarded

as more important than their own. Therefore, even though industrial clock time ends after parents' work hours, its ideology to *delay and alienate* desires until the emergence of the "right time" can impact children's lives. The dilemma of the child's voice being heard at the convenience of the parent was also present in Kathy's decision to take the walk on the day when she was not preoccupied by her own needs: "I am not going to be thinking that I'm hungry or that I'd rather be home." The child will be heard when the adult is free, when the adult is not hungry, not tired, and does not have any other important work to attend to. However, restricting children's feelings, desires, conversations, and narratives to an adult designated convenient time can be tyrannical to children's voices and their way of conceptualizing the world.

However unintentional, the control of children's time by the parent also spoke to the marginalization of children's experience in response to the productive economy of the adults. Before the opportunity to take the embedded walk, walking or spending time after school hours on the ground often was considered uneventful, unproductive, and purposeless. Macy discussed that she did not understand the purpose and significance of lingering around in the school after school hours with her 4-year-old son. She asked, "Are we just going to walk around without a purpose?" Kathy also echoed a similar feeling "I did not know we could spend such a kind of time with them, just sort of there, and roaming and talking about the school and the grounds without a purpose." Thus, walking around the playground or lingering in spaces for an unstructured time appeared to be a significant deviation from an economic time system and was equivalent to "wasting" time. As discussed earlier, when we adopt a commodified notion of time, time is not passed but spent. In this economic system, free time is accumulated in relation to work time. In such a value system, even play can possibly become legitimate, as it is children's work. Macy's and other parents' accounts reflected that they did value the significance of

children's time and their play, but its legitimacy could possibly need to be compromised when the adult's hunger and exhaustion took priority. In contrast, Waldorf schools have great respect and appreciation for children's play, culture, and free exploration. However, parents' accounts also appear to suggest that children's play simultaneously runs the risk of being labelled as pleasure and can get compromised and undermined in relation to parent's leisure and productive time. In such a structure, leisure time might be sanctioned within a definite structure that parents perceive and grant as playtime and relaxation: recess, after school hours, the weekend.

Despite a desire and appreciation to be receptive to the child, it was also challenging for adults to comprehend children's sense of time. Allison expressed this difficulty of grasping her 7-year old child's time: "Yeah. I talked with her teacher last year. They did not learn time in first grade. I think they might this year, [...] it was too early for them to really grasp the concept of time." Allison's account reveals that she equated time with clock time. In being confronted with a time structure where hours followed a different temporal rhythm, she remembered teachers' assertion that the child is too young to "grasp the concept of time," but concludes that the child has "no concept of time" at all. When adults struggle to comprehend children's time or consider that children do not have a concept of time, it legitimizes their authority to impose their dominant structure on children and can force children to leave places, stop playing, and finish tasks at an adult pace. It is true that her daughter is too young to learn linear time, but likely soon will be baptized into "learning time" through the careful introduction of literacy.

The widespread practice of teaching children time is closely linked with the industrial revolution (Thompson, 1967). Literacy, like industry, required a different mode of time that could control, regulate, and allocate children's bodies into spaces. Through the instrument of the curriculum, literacy imposes restrictive temporal cycles that shape children's activities and their

cognitive life. Clock time and its signifier, the bell, signals that it is time to switch attention from math to history, from school hours to family hours. The curriculum time as a finite time also defines the speed and intensity of the educational process, for example, the notions that fifteen minutes to run on the school grounds or only so much can be packed into one year (Adam, 1995). The amount of knowledge and the speed of grasping knowledge will be dictated by the clock. For Abram (1999), the origins of linear time as a social construction can be traced back to the shift from an oral-based culture to an alphabetic one. The creation of the alphabet allowed people to record historical events; people became interested in human events separate from their relationship with the earth (Abram, 1997).

Being sensitive and respectful to colonization of children's pre-reflective and embodied way of being in time through literacy, Waldorf delays literacy in early years. Nevertheless, Allison's description of her interaction with the teacher suggests that slowly and gradually the young child will be introduced into the time of literacy. The learning of the alphabet would lead to the birth of a different subjectivity. However, her daughter's understanding of clock time will not be a cognitive development but a literacy development. The adult structure and institutions benefit from this indoctrination of children into clock time. The hope is that when the child learns the adult time, it will be easier to implement their time discipline against them. This perceptive child body, which has a living engagement with places and the natural rhythms of time, has little place in a capitalistic system that needs to perpetuate a disembodied and isolated self. When time is a disembodied entity separate from the land, it not only separates the human time from the time of the land but also dictates that this andro-centric time is the only time that exists. The ideology of this andro-centric time is the acceleration of production. The child's time slows down the accelerated time that has estranged us from the world around us, valuing and

listening to the pace of the non-human world.²⁵ To keep alive the child's non-egocentric engagement with the natural world also threatens the structure of the capitalistic system itself, which is dependent on the exploitation of the ecosystem for mass production and the creation of a subjectivity that desires unlimited consumption.

Another consideration in the discussion of the effects of time is that since my interviews were conducted with five mothers, this rush of time might also capture the gender dynamics of women's daily routines. While none of the women in the interviews explicitly mentioned or complained about gender as an important factor that controlled and managed their time, it is important to critically analyze the gender dynamics implicitly informing the mothers' lives. Women tend to experience what Bryson (2007) calls "time poverty" in having to shuffle multiple tasks and relational demands. The mothers' complaint in the study of not having "enough time," "too short," struggling to "getting everything accomplished" tends to suggest that they were likely experiencing the "dual temporal burden" of navigating their domestic and professional responsibilities. Rita Felski (2000) points out that this dual temporal burden has often casted women into being the ardent "clock watcher[s]" in our society:

Many women nowadays are, if anything, even more preoccupied with time measurement than men. Caught between the conflicting demands of home and work, often juggling child care and frantic about their lack of time, it is women who are clock watchers, who obsess about appointments and deadlines, who view time as a precious commodity to hoard or to spend. (p. 20)

²⁵ We will notice that through the embedded walk, parents find a renewed intimate relationship to places and the natural environment.

During the interviews, besides bodily exhaustion, mothers identified continuous thinking and worrying about the unattended (the invisible mental labour, Walzer, 1996) household responsibilities such as cooking, feeding, and taking care of other siblings as important reasons that rushed them home. Indeed, the mothers' time was also "others' time." Thus, after finishing the industrial shift (the working hours), mothers were confronted with another shift: the "second shift" (Hochschild, 2012). Moreover, housework follows a temporal order that is in contrast with the industrial structure. It is often pre-scheduled and requires attending to others without a definite time frame. It might be said that in being predominantly responsible for housework and their contact with children's time, mothers were living both in industrial time and a temporal order that was at odds with the former (Odih, 1999). Nevertheless, the mothers' desire to go home, to eat, relax, communicated a counter-language to the hegemonic system where women's time and their bodily desire are often compromised for the needs of others. In attending to their time and desire, the mothers reclaimed their marginalized time, but the strong interdependence of women and children leads to the marginalization of children's time.

It is also important to iterate that even though the household follows a different temporal order, the rhythms of the household are presumably now more and more impacted and synched by industrial time. The mothers' bodily exhaustion and rush to finish the unattended work at home may also reflect that domestic life is now in close adherence to two adult structures: school and work time. The child and the adult are required to eat their meals, rest, have family time, and decide their bedtime not in accordance with the rhythms of the day, but on the clock time decided by the school and the work structures.

While this theme has mostly understood parents' alienation with their embodied, present-oriented world as a result of clock time, the mothers' accounts also bring forth that parents'

struggles were additionally embedded in the complexity of self within existent society. In contemporary society, individuals are confronted with the problem of the fragmentation of time, space, and self. The individuals are called to define and re-create themselves in different, inter-related, and contradictory social contexts (Gergen, 1991; Sloan, 1996). Gergen (1991) and Sloan (1996) point out that throughout history identities, life goals, and situation have been interwoven and congruent with who we are and where we are headed. However, in the contemporary world, time, space, and self are not only disturbed, disrupted, uncertain, and unpredictable but also incongruent. The parents' identities therefore constantly require reorganization in conjunction with the details of their material and social situations. Parents are simultaneously present in multiple and plural life-worlds, where they have to attend to the role of being an employee, being an autonomous individual who takes care of the needs of the self (an employee who maintains a work/life balance), and also a care-taker who is attentive to the need of the child. Each of these selves states co-exist but are also contradictory to each other. Splitting or fragmentation is natural as parents are confronted with plurality of voices and are being exposed to new relationships, new circumstances, and feelings or moods that can quickly change or shift in the same time and space. The past can now be quickly restored, and each moment is enveloped in the guilt born of all that was possible, but now foreclosed. Not only do technologies fashion and furnish an invitation to incoherence through these and other means, they also confront one with myriad avenues pointing the way out of immediate contact. Social media, electronic communication, and even modern transportation has changed our way of being in the world, requiring and fostering us to live plural life-worlds. The incoherence and fragmentation are not only the product but also a necessity of the modern world. There is pressure to be successful at all of these endeavors, even when the goals are contradictory and incongruent.

“Take out time.” The call for attention to the world of the child happens all the time, but the embedded walk required the mothers to “take out time.” Or as Annie articulated “the most striking was to have that time set aside to hear” her three children (twin sons [five years old] and a daughter [nine years old]). Taking out time or setting aside time conveyed that in the parents’ world, this call to be attentive to their children’s world rather than remain in the split, plural world of the modern times. Mother’s aspiration to *take out time* or *set aside time* was a call for a different temporal order than that of the contemporary time or future-oriented time, which possibly alienated and fragmented them from being organically present to their experiences and their children’s experiences. Taking out time can be understood as a temporal practice that was needed for them to re-orient themselves to a different temporal mode. With the desire to feel satiated and relaxed, mothers communicated that they were wishing for a sacred time when they could be fully present to attend to their children’s worlds. They had to adopt the familiar mode of calendar time to access a new temporal structure. While the colloquialism “taking out time” might portray a linear model of time that can be broken down into measurable units, it also captures the pre-reflective nature of time. Mothers aspired to “take out time” so that a phenomenon could be “seen” or “witnessed” and so that they could live a different form of time. By taking a break and stepping away from her day-to-day temporal practices in the world, the mothers were called to experience new rhythms and attunements and to come to live time more consciously and more fully. The mothers noticed that the embedded walk enabled them to be in time, with time, and move through time.

Kathy said, “Yeah, just to take the time to look at it. Just to stop myself from being in my normal routine. I’m here. I’m going to be present.” In setting this time aside, in slowing down, and in orientating to the present moment, she encounters herself (I am here) and her child (I am

going to be present to you). With the intent of clearing their minds and slowing down the activity of the everyday life, the mothers initiated a meditative walk through the woods of the playground, fostering the ability to focus their attention on the here and now and keeping their attention oriented to the other: their child, environment, and the play. Withdrawing from the time of the everyday that is centered around their life world, they found their attention to be re-oriented to the time and space of their child. Annie expressed, “And just stop and take the time to say I am gonna look at this space from your perspective.” This remembrance of the time is an evocation that allows them to be present—being “present” to the “present.” Time, space, and awareness are deeply intertwined phenomena. Whether sitting on a meditation mat or walking in the playground, we are called to a different mode of time and space that fosters awareness. This being present in the meditative walk created a radical openness and a pull in the direction of the child. The pull evidently happened because the child-centric embedded walk restored and re-oriented adults to live a time away from the controlled and regulated time structure of their own preferences to a time that was regulated and directed by their children.

However, through the embedded walk, the parent is pulled to witness her child’s world and to reimagine and relive the nature of her child’s time. This withdrawal from the clock time (adult)²⁶ possibly also synchronized the parents to the lived time and world of their child.

Through the present-oriented walk, parents surrender control and submit to the natural rhythms of their child’s life, becoming receptive to different ways of seeing and living. Through contemplative slowness and consciously reminding themselves to “take time” to witness their

²⁶ Even though our daily lives are largely governed by clock time, the non-linear nature of time or the lived time might be hidden but not an absent feature of adult life. Thus, the distinction between adult and child time is a falsification, only created to address that children are more attuned to the lived time.

child's play, the parents rested their body and mood, which was not centered on the futurity of tasks ("I need to eat," or "I am tired"). While management of their time was previously regulated by their own desire ("I need to go, I need to eat, I need to do"), it now shifted to the desire of the child. Thus, recognition of the children's experience brought a new understanding of children's lived time and subjectivity.²⁷

Allison reflected that having time that was open-ended fostered new perceptions and insights about her child's sense of time. Through the walk, she experienced a temporal order that was defined and structured by her child, rather than the clock. Allison realized that for her 7-year-old daughter, time is synchronized in the fairies, stories, and narrative of her play, rather than a disembodied, decontextualized entity. If the child is having fun, she desires to experience the event for a longer time. Allison's sense of time shifted from that which was externally measured to learning that hours can feel like a moment to her child:

She is having a good time then it seems very short. And if she's having a bad time then it seems like eternity. They had ongoing dramas, fairies, and things. It seems like if she is taken home immediately after school and doesn't have that time to play then she's missing out on some aspects of the drama.

Time, space, and activities are not separate phenomena for the child (Simms, 2008). If Allison's daughter is taken home immediately or interrupted, the fable will continue without her and she will "miss out" and be lost if she tries to return in the future. The child's time is also intersubjective, as it is closely intertwined in the time of the others (friends) and living with them

²⁷ In this paragraph, I intentionally substituted mothers with a generic term parents in order to avoid the pressurizing discourse of creating another hierarchy where women and mothers are pressured and encouraged to sacrifice their time and their needs for the demands of the other.

in the same time (enjoying the story and the play). Through the embedded walk, Allison was a witness with new awareness, and with a new relationship to time; she could now realize the drama of fairies and stories that held her child captive. With warmth in her eyes, Allison experienced intimately the fullness of her child's play: "She's having fun, she's with people she likes."

By taking the embedded walk with their child, the adult has an opportunity to reflect that the measurement of the clock is only one way of understanding time and is often paralleled by local, idiosyncratic, contextual ways of being in time. As discussed before, time is an invisible mode of our experience, whose presence or rawness is realized in boredom. If the child remains enchanted by the stories and the play, the sense of time disappears; it is only the play and the enjoyment with another that is realized. In the call to go home, the child is puzzled: it cannot possibly be the time to go home, since the play has not ended.

Through this renewed perspective of time, Allison developed a new understanding of her child's tantrums. With amazement she articulates "definitely shifted my attention of why she would want to linger, that made a big difference, between talking to her about it, and then actually doing the walk. I understood why she was cranky or threw a tantrum." Allison realized that for her daughter, "being" at the school and "being" at home are different. For the child, subjectivity is tied to space, time, and activities. In an adult imposed time, the child might be forced to make a quick transition from the playful self to the family self. Family routines, with structured mealtime and bedtimes, are seemingly in accordance with the homogenized time of the adults and can perhaps be very different from playtime, where time is synchronized with the rhythm of the child. The hurried transition can be frustrating, agitating, and confusing to the child, as the adult world can seem to be unwelcoming to her unique rhythms. Allison says, "She

was cranky” or “threw a tantrum.” Her daughter carried not only the loss of the world that she left behind, but seems to have become disorientated, as she could not make the automatic shift from one way of being to the other that adults have become accustomed to. As previously discussed, when an adult system controls the child’s time, the norms of free time—where the child needs to be, how she needs to be, and how long she needs to be—can be structured by the adult centric idea of “free time.” Listening to and honoring children’s time conceivably remains in the purview of adult time. When adults seemingly impose their time structures, the child resists by voicing her sense of different time, reminding and asserting to the adult that she is not done playing yet and wants to continue being at her beloved places. Nevertheless, such a cry can often lead to cultural indignation in labels like “slow,” “lazy,” “difficult,” “defiant,” or “cranky,” rather than a response to an adult’s particular understanding of time. The child’s tantrum is thus apparently a counter-agentic voice, reminding the adult that other time and other desires operate which need to be heard, accommodated, and appreciated. With such a cry, adults tend to grant children a few extra minutes, priming the children to leave the space and play and attend to a different nature of time.

Nevertheless, the present oriented embedded walk transformed Allison’s daily routine and engagement with her child. In understanding her child’s time better, Allison gained a clearer understanding of her child’s subjectivity. Time is in some sense synonymous with subjectivity. Extending this line of thinking, we could propose that we are time itself. A popular Sanskrit saying affirms “Aham Kal Asmi”: “I am time itself,” while Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) also provocatively writes, “we are the upsurge of time” (p. 497), “I am myself time” (p. 489), and “We must understand time as the subject and the subject as time” (p. 490). The embedded walk required Allison to *experiment* with different ways of living time, thereby experimenting with

her own subjectivity. Broadening her temporal repertoire during the walk transformed her inter-subjectivity with her daughter:

I try to be more lenient about letting her stay after school, as many days as possible to play out there. In that regard, I can see how having free time with some friends, after school is beneficial to her, as opposed to the school day's over, we're going directly home and now we're doing family stuff. There's more of a transition.

Allison discovered that the newfound remembrance of time (call to the present) and altered meeting that she experienced during the walk were transformative in her future interactions with her child. Her engagement with the different mode of time during the embedded walk also brought shifts in Allison's subjectivity. She said, "I am lenient now." Although the word "lenient" falls in the power structure of authority, Allison's account reflects a certain receptivity to her child's world. By shifting into a different mode of time during the walk, she presumably became a different parent to her child. She does not rush her child or unwittingly impose her own sense of time on her daughter by quickly transporting her to family time. She expressed that she began to surrender control and let go of a well-ordered schedule, listening closer to her child's voice in order to shape their collective time. While previously her sense of time was defined by her own needs ("what do I want?"), it shifted to include "what does my child want?" The greatest shift she experienced was in her newfound ability to slow down and become more present and calibrated to her child's pace and to offer her child creative freedom to use her time.

After the embedded walk, the process of learning to shape and accommodate her present time according to her child's needs also transformed the rich tapestry woven into future subjectivity. She realized that if she lets her child be *present* in this event time of play where the child remains enchanted with stories of the play, the *future* time (self) would be more relaxed at

home. Allison elaborated on how this relational interaction with her daughter in the present transformed her daughter's subjectivity in the future: "She doesn't have all that energy. She's more calm and able to come home and do her few chores and get ready for dinner and things like that." Allison's reverence and respect for her child's time allows her child to finish her play and make a smooth transition. Instead of being rushed, the daughter now notices her mother after school and is reminded of the time to go back home, but the wait and the slower pace by the mother expresses that there is enough time to attend and finish her play and be primed for time at home. This process of learning to shape her time in accordance with her child's needs transformed parent's subjectivity, child's subjectivity, and intersubjective time.

By dethroning clock time, the mother honored the child's times, the child's world, and even deepened the emotional bond between them. She found value in waiting and a sense of care in this intersubjective time. As Bryson (2007) suggests, "caring work involves a distinctive temporal consciousness that is in many ways at odds with the dominant time culture of contemporary capitalist societies" (p. 129). Caring involves learning to waste time, a value which contradicts productive economy-based time. The mother learns the wisdom in wasting time by watching her daughter play and her daughter cherishes the value of emotional bonds with her friends that are strengthened during this wasted time. One is reminded of the valuable advice about wasting time that the fox gives to the little boy in *The Little Prince*:

It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important [...] But in herself alone she is more important than all the hundreds of your other roses: because it is she that I have watered...because it is she that I have listened to when she grumbled, or boasted, or even sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is my rose. (de Saint-Exupéry, 1943/ 2013, p. 21)

“Wasting time” metamorphizes time from a commodity in a generalized exchange economy to a singular instance in time as a time of care and love. As such it challenges everyday life not only by the event of the specifically familial interpersonal, but also by the politics of the generalized social and the relations between people in the commons as such.

Since we have detailed a number of ideas pertinent to the theme of time, it seems important to re-iterate and summarize them. Clock time is structured in an oppressive system that marginalizes parents’ time, leaving them rushed, distracted, and disembodied, the impact of which reverberates after hours in children’s and family time. One notices the social structure of time toppling down a hierarchy of sorts: work time marginalized parents’ time, in turn leading to a marginalization of children’s time and their world. The child is seemingly assimilated into the hierarchy of the calendar and clock time, which can rush them to leave places and be in places depending on the *will* of the adult time. However, for the child, time is more open-ended, flowing organically in response to what came before and never in a straight, predictable line. The dominant linear model renders children’s (other)²⁸ time structures invisible and intangible. When a time structure is suppressed from the social structure, parents believe that children do not have a concept of time. However, assimilation is a false promise based on sameness. This is how

²⁸ Despite the prevalence of clock time, it also is important to recognize that specific cultures’ relation to time is unique, and clock time can be limiting and rigid or more fluid and permissive. Since most of my participants were white females, this adult time can also be translated as white time or more precisely Western white time. Even within a homogenized culture, different rhythms of time co-exist that resist or follow a more event-oriented interpersonal time than a rigid clock time. For instance, a popular time in the Indian community is IST (Indian Standard Time), where time is slower and often eventful, based on the rhythms and respect for the social and interpersonal context (attending fully to the person and event before me rather than to a futurity). The co-existence of different time structures can also disadvantage individuals from different communities who adhere to a different normative time, often labelling them as incompetent and unprofessional.

power succeeds in disciplining a child's world without physical persuasion, as it is based on the adult's ideological assumption that teaching and modifying children's time are necessary for them and that it is being done for their own good. When children's time structure is considered to be irrelevant in comparison to the adult time, their voices, their play, and their experiences can be monitored, classified, and accommodated according to the adult's schedule. Thus, the child's time is either considered *inferior, lesser, immature, or invisible*.

However, by undergoing a pull in the direction of the child through the embedded walk, the mothers had enough time and space to widen their temporal repertoire. The high degree of temporal freedom was integral in cultivating a new relationship with her own time, her child's time, and exploring different subjective and intersubjective ways of being with each of their children. Interestingly, it was perhaps through the receptivity to live a different sense of time that the mothers were able to discern their own internal compass of time and needs (I am tired, I am hungry, I need to go home), and began to adopt time structures that could value and include the child's way of living time (lingering around). Through the walk, they were seemingly able to understand the hegemony of time and make choices about spending, thinking, and speaking about time in an effort to take the clock time back and make it their own. Fuchs (2001) says that we need to learn to re-appropriate the time we have "de-alienated" (p. 185). The transformation in the daily lives of parents happened because the mothers were able to move away from the fast-paced and fragmented contemporary time, which rushes and splits self through an experience to a slow and integrated lived time where they could share in the inter-subjective time of their child.

The child-centric embedded walk also brought the question of time and its complexity to the center of the research. Scientific research has close association with clock time. A carefully designed measuring index marking rates of change, duration of observation, and language of

before and after are all integral parts of research (Adam, 1995). The embedded walk moved away from the fixed quantified nature of time to thinking and re-thinking of moving in time and with time. The embedded walk did not use time as a measurement index but as a transformative index, where research was not simply conducted over time, but created a different mode of time and being-in-time. For it is during and through the embedded walk that the observers' (parents) and the observed (children's) worlds met. It seems especially vital that a child-centric researcher take up this challenge of thinking about time. The embedded walk, with its focus on process, brings forth who defines time, who controls time, whose time, bringing and transforming the socio-historical context of power embedded in the everyday life of parents and children.

Theme: Distinctive Intentionality

“Glimpse of their life.” Parents' openness to “take out” or “set aside” time also offered them the opportunity to step outside of their daily routines and parameters of interactions. This stepping outside re-oriented their relationship to children's time and world. Since we are habituated to experience time only in relation to the *attention* activities demand, the open expanse of time without a structure could have possibly been counter-productive to the purpose of the embedded walk. Without a purpose and a structure, the luxury of time would have left parents confused, ambiguous, dispersing their engagement with the “task” or making them feel lost, bored, restless, uncomfortable, and inattentive. Time as a luxury or excess can lead to restlessness because of our desire to make time productive, but we also desire structure, purpose, order, or meaningfulness within time. Thus, while “setting aside time” provided parents the flexibility to make a temporal shift in their everyday engagement with their children, the explicit and implicit instructions on the embedded walk unpacked how the time needed to be spent

(structure) and the significance of this time (purpose) in their inter-subjective relation with their children.

For some parents, a simple reminder that they were walking through the play spaces as part of “a study” helped in orienting themselves and their children to the distinctive and special purpose of the walk. Macy noted this shift in her intention, which she contrasted with the routine pick up after school as: “are we going to walk around the whole school without a purpose. But these gave a purpose for that, and kind of see places of the school.” For Liz, “saying this was a study [...] walking around and asking her questions like what, how she uses the spaces and what she likes about the spaces. I think gave a good framework [...] especially kind of provided steps and processes, and then you could see it and follow her.” By contextualizing the embedded walking as part of the study, parents prepared themselves for different (and greater) attentiveness and openness to ways of relating with their children or different kinds of children’s reality that were usually inhibited by their daily routine.

Even a simple reflex or perception such as looking or walking is not meaningless, but is rooted in deeper intentionality (purpose). As Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) asserts, “perception is perception of something” (p. 75). Macy called the walk “a little way to get a snapshot as to, oh, when you are here? What are you doing?” Similarly, for Kathy it was “getting a little glimpse of his perspective. I’m not with him. For most hours of work days.” With words like “little snapshot,” “window,” or “glimpse,” mothers communicated that the intentionality of the embedded walk was rooted in the desire to grasp a moment; a quick glance in the *everyday* world of their child that was not figural *every day*. The embedded walk, probably unlike most research, was not a turn towards observation or measurement of distant objective data, but rather an

invitation to parents to pay attention or glance into the world of that beloved data: their children's world.

With affectionate nostalgia, the mothers described the purpose of the embedded walk as catching a glimpse of their children's life that sometimes was concealed to them. Macy described how her child's transition to nursery school built walls that fenced her from looking at the world of her child. She stated, "Whereas in nursery school where he is now when I did the study. I drop him off in the classroom and pick him up in the classroom. So, I don't see him, like I used to." Before nursery school, she explained, she would drop in and pick him up at the school's open spaces, but now the picking up and dropping off was confined to a classroom setting. Therefore, the school structure, with its discrete walls and classrooms, seemed to prevent her from a more intimate engagement with her child. Remembering the past, she expressed the sensory experience of distant glancing:

I would pull up or I'd be in my car, and I can see him playing. In the space, you know, every morning during drop-offs, I'd see where he goes, and I go back to my car, and I always watched too, before I leave, see what he was doing. And then when I go to pick him up, especially if I'm early, I would just park, and I could see what he was doing without interfering. And, I liked watching.

With her child progressing to a higher grade, she tuned into the gradual loss she had undergone from witnessing her child's world all the time at home to his advancement at school, where often only snapshots of his life were available. She summarized her experience of loss in a few words: "He's out of my care for four hours a day and I don't get a detailed report every day." While sensitive to the psychological necessity of this separation for her child, she also struggled to make peace with her own desire "to know something" or "watch without interfering." Thus, the

embedded walk felt like a chance to reconnect, sustain, and preserve the thread of an invested bond that she felt was lost or fraying. For Liz, the embedded walk permitted entry into the world of her 5-year-old daughter that was prohibited (walled) in her other children's lives. She articulated:

her older brothers are in high school now so walking through their schools with them is very much a process of trying to pull information out of them but them not really wanting to share very much about it [...] it's nice to be at a place where she can talk. A little bit about it. It gives me something to imagine that outside time is like during the day.

In her account, one hears the contrast she experienced between walking through her teenage sons' school, where she seemingly felt sharing and getting to know their world was an uphill task of tactfully "pull [ing] out information," and the ease with which her younger daughter was open to sharing about her world. This hospitality of her daughter made Liz feel intimacy in re-imagining her child's world outside of their home that was more difficult to access with her teenagers.

The distance created either through the school's walls or children's desire for a private world elicited complex and mixed feelings from the mothers that their children were growing up and their worlds were changing. Allison articulated this change in dynamic with her daughter from "always needing the mother to not needing (her) at all." At home, the mothers were mostly aware of their child's rhythm, and could monitor, alter, and adapt their child's spatial, personal, and temporal boundaries. In contrast, the worlds of their children at school were not always under the parents' control, were a secret, and were inaccessible: "an uphill task of pulling information" or hidden behind the classroom walls. The privacy, independence, and distance to the parents was experienced as grief and loss. The school and the transition for most parents in

the study meant altering, giving up, and reimagining ways of being with their child. They were expected to learn to separate themselves with little recognition of the loss that they were experiencing.

In deconstructing parents' descriptions, we can critically understand the possible impact of school and authoritative systems in shaping parent and child intersubjective interactions. The paradoxical dilemma of separation and distance that effects Kathy, Macy, and Allison's lives tends to be dominated by dogmatic assumptions propagated and regulated by educational, psychological, and professional literature and media. The gender and power values laden in these assumptions need to be questioned and teased out.

Separation as a phenomenon is closely tied to the literature on maternal or early deprivation. Bowlby's (1958) famous work, even though it also took into account conditions ranging from institutionalization, abusive caretakers, and war,²⁹ popularized the idea that lack of maternal care resulted in a lifelong psychological impact for the child (Eyer, 1992). The work of Ainsworth (1967) further emphasized the critical nature of mother and child separation with respect to the development of attachment styles. Moreover, Klaus and Kennell's (1976) research on bonding and sensitive periods, even though rejected by the scientific community, popularized the necessity of mother and child intimacy in media and educational settings (Eyer, 1992). From this literature, it seems that two primary (and contrasting) discourses of pathological mothers emerge: the self-preoccupied mother who neglects her child's needs, and the overly involved "helicopter" or engulfing mother, who suffers from separation anxiety and fails to provide her child with distance and privacy. The parent and child relationship is a spectrum, but these two

²⁹ Although the impact of the mother on the child was present in psychoanalytic literature, Bowlby's work gave scientific validation to it.

discourses create a binary of two opposite ends. The unintended consequence of these theories, which continue to be dominant in parenting discourse, is that parents (especially mothers) are frequently required to learn to provide their children with an *optimal distance* to prevent future pathological development.

This deterministic understanding of the parent-child relationship may become internalized by contemporary parents. In the Waldorf parents' narratives, one hears the seemingly tyrannical "shoulds" and "musts" of parenting that hovered over their desire for intimacy. Liz invokes the paradox of a parent's desire to know and yet being surveilled by the preaching voice of what a good parent should do in her statement: "I have read that it is important for children to have open space that is not necessarily known by their parents. But I do have a curiosity to know what her life is like in school." In a similar tone, Allison articulates that she realizes that being separate and independent is good for her child, but she adds that as a mother it has been a loss for her to not know aspects of her daughter. Macy further considered "I understand this distance is important to him." In Macy, Liz, and Allison's descriptions, we hear that they seemed to police and regulate their desire for intimacy and experience of loss, persuading themselves that an *optimal distance* between them and their child was not only necessary, but also beneficial for the accomplishment of autonomy and independence. In their accounts, one hears polymorphous voices of curiosity, loss, desire, and a pledge to respect and honor their children's worlds that coincided with mitigating their own desires for closeness. Mothers tried hard to understand the psychological value of separation for their children, but also felt a loss. It seems that that these contradictory values of intimacy and separation that exist within psychological literature and media led them to deeply censor their inner lives.

To examine these values critically, one must consider these assumptions, proposed as significant developmental achievements, embedded in and propagating of gender and class discourses. Burman (1994) points out that because of the hegemonic prizing of autonomy and independence, as the child ages, she and her parents are predicted to move from a stereotypically feminine attachment to a culturally determined masculine detachment. This narrative falls prey to equating maturity with “the masculine capacity to tolerate separation” (p. 87), thereby implicitly deeming attachment immature and inferior. The work of Chodorow (1999), Burke (2005), and Gilligan (1993) emphasizes that women and young girls have a relational, empathic, interconnected way of relating to self and others³⁰. Canella (1999) claims that these fundamentals, which are present even in child-centric schools, are highly laden with middle class assumptions. As a member of a powerful group, a middle-class (male) child may be comparatively free to develop and enjoy the value of independence, whereas for certain marginalized groups, collaboration and interconnectedness with the community would be a necessary goal. These hegemonic values of idealized child development can then silence and devalue diverse definitions and diverse people that run counter to the normative expectation.

Separation and independence tend to be virtues regulated and cherished by the school and educational systems. Yet such an ideology provides very little space to accommodate the vulnerability and loss parents experience due to the school system. In Allison, Kathy, and Macy’s descriptions, we hear indications that the stance of autonomy and independence practiced by the school system perhaps neglected their experience of loss. It is important to note

³⁰ This interconnected way of relating is not considered to be biological but is contextualized with respect to the different social environments that male and female children experience. These authors consider such values to be qualities that even men should strive for.

that despite an extensive literature on child-parent (mother) separation, there is a paucity of literature on parents' (mothers') first-person accounts of separation. Significant events such as resuming work after pregnancy or parting at daycare or kindergarten have mostly been contextualized in ways that blame and label women as deserters (Adam, 1995): leaving their children for the work life. McClelland's (1999) phenomenological work is one of the few studies that captured the first day at kindergarten as a symbol of the loss that mothers experienced due to the loosening and changing relationship with their children. In her participants' descriptions, one hears that the teachers and school systems were significant in managing and censoring mothers' emotions: "So I kind of stood there until the teacher kind of waved me on. That's when I lost it. I thought I was okay, and I got in the car and started driving home, and I had to pull over to the side of the road and cry myself, because my little angel is in school and he's not with his mom anymore, and that was hard for me" (p. 182).

As discussed in the section on time, child care remains such a significant part of mothers' lives that they often navigate major life decisions around it. For instance, Macy brought this complexity of feminine life to my attention "I've been both a working mom, working and traveling, and a stay-at-home mom. I had left corporate life to be with my two children." Nevertheless, with her child's transition to a higher grade and his world being walled by the classroom, she was perhaps expected to calmly accept this transition as in the best interest of her child. School assumingly meant accepting new boundaries: "Always needing the mother" transitioned into needing to accept that "He is out of my care." Thus, the school system can also be subtly controlled by assumptions of independence and autonomy, communicating to the parents that it is best they deny, control, curtail, and hide their feelings of loss, justifying such a stance as what good parents (mothers) need to do. The parents' desire to be included in their

children's world by glancing from a distance through the window of their car or cherishing a moment by sharing a conversation can then have little space in the school system.

Such a regulation might then define a normative mode of child-parent interaction rather than an acceptance and engagement with the complexity of their relationship. Perhaps when such a limited scope of engagement is enacted, parents' desire to enter their children's world, "a curiosity to know what her life is like in school," gets restricted to parent teacher meetings, where the distance is so wide that gathering the world of their child, as Liz points out, becomes "an uphill task." Here the school life is considered to be separate from the home life, where home life presumably only enters school life as a spectator of surveillance used to understand the reasons for a delinquent child. Although the Waldorf School does have an active parent and school body where parents are integrally involved in the life of the school, the structure of the school system with the restrictive classrooms and implicit rules seemingly continue to obstruct parents from being more fully included in their child's life. The school might then exist as a separate world with limited scope for parent and child interactions.

My argument against values of separation is not meant to deny that children at times may want separation from their parents, and I have unpacked this important need in Chapter Three of this dissertation. However, my reflections speak to prescriptive definitions, where the intimacies, rituals, and amusements of parents and children time have to be given up immediately. The expertise that mothers (parents) and children possess about their lives is possibly denied, and they are allowed to interact only in predetermined ways. The parents can then apparently feel pressured to maintain an "optimal distance," rather than to feel agentic in the license to maintain an interpersonal relationship that is unique to their singular experience without it being or feeling pathologized. What feels natural, personal and intimate—such as observing a child quietly

through teary eyes that remember and reminisce—are not only pathologized by the clear and expressed sanction of a disapproving outside, but also become internalized such that mothers might then become self-surveilling, desiring intimacy yet maintaining distance, experiencing loss yet hiding it in order to obey the “expert voice” who advises them that this is good for their child.

However, with words like “glimpse,” “snapshot,” “little window,” mothers asserted that a different and more sensitive way of looking can be possible in mother-child interaction. Mothers also expressed a desire to peek through a barrier into their child’s world: even if not unlike the quick flash of scenery from a passing train, the eye behind the camera lens, a window that is not quite large enough to see clearly. However, to gaze and to watch are delicate phenomena. In the eye rests the love for the beloved, but this very gaze can strip humanity and obliterate the other. What is then the difference between the gaze of the mother and the gaze of *others*? The answer partially lies in the etymological meaning of the word glimpse itself, as “brief and imperfect vision.” While the gaze of othering can be understood as a devaluing gaze of the dominant culture (colonizer) that pre-fixes, totalizes, and strips away personhood, the peeking of the mother is a glance that watches without claim to complete grasping. Macy, in remembering the “older times,” notes that she “would just park, and I could see what he was doing without interfering.” She watches but does not interrupt the play. The gaze here is horizontal rather than vertical. In the vertical gaze, one sees oneself, not only through the eyes of the dominant other, but the gaze also forms an image of the self as an inferior and foreign other. Fanon (1967) invokes this very gaze, by elaborating how such a colonial gaze creates a disjuncture between the person of color’s first-person views of self and the other’s view of them. Alternatively, as Yancy (2004) expresses, “It [was] this body which is held captive, always already pre-fixed by the white gaze” (p. 22). The gaze effortlessly rids one’s agency as a person.

However, *horizontal* looking by the mother is rooted in *observing* that is looking with *care*. Observing has etymological connections to preserving, saving, regarding, protecting (Van Manen 1990). Recall the fox's advice to the little boy in *The Little Prince* on what it means to care by observing or looking. The prince sits down on the grass at a small distance from the fox and says nothing because, as the fox tells him, "Words are the source of misunderstandings" (de Saint-Exupéry, 1943/2013, p. 21). The fox looks at him out of the corner of his eye and every day, at the same time, the prince arrives at their designated spot and sits a little closer to the fox. This looking with care according to fox is to "tame," "make friends" or "establish a relationship."

The embedded walk is then possibly the act of seeing, witnessing, or visibility to the lost world that is not an empirical objective, or scientific event but (in)sight born out of or born with desire of an intimate participation with an other—a seeking to become intimate with that to which it attends. As Laubscher (2010) notes, this radically transforms how we understand witnessing: "To witness, now, as it is to testify, is consequently a summons to a wholly different order of truth than fact, proof, totalizing law, theory or settled science. It is nothing less than a summons to justice, love, care, and the self that is myself by the other in me" (p. 63). To put it more simply, it brings the idea of "love," a word we often dismiss as mere sentimentality, to the center of the embedded walk or research. Through the embedded walk, Liz and Macy wished to rejuvenate and re-bond with the intimacy and love that they once shared with their children. Their receptivity, their openness, was born out of the love to glance into their children's world: the world that was once part of them. They desired knowledge of their children's world as they reflected that it was the attention and knowledge about their children's world, that deepened their love and care for them. Karl Jaspers (1974), in praise of knowing or knowledge as close to love,

quotes Nicolas of Cusa: “Knowledge is identical with love and love identical with knowledge” (cited in Zajonc, 2006, p. 13). No wonder, yearning to *know* is *Eros* or love in pure form because the parent wants to know her beloved child. Through the embedded walk the parents desired to re-live the vital contact with their children’s world that they once felt but now was lost due to distance and separation perpetuated by the walls of the school structure or by the personal boundaries by the older children to demarcate their desire of privacy. I am reminded here of Derrida (2001) who says, “The tears say that the eyes are not made primarily for seeing but for crying” (p. 115). In the mothers’ narratives, we see tears of warmth, tears of loss, but also tears of wonder—a welcoming of forgotten intimacy.

Theme: Distinctive Realities

I have my parent eyes on... I put on Y’s eyes. Without a clear path (framework), vision can get disoriented; as such, parents were required to follow a path during the embedded walk, but a path laid out by their children. The mothers acknowledged that this shifted their orientation, making them realize that this was a different kind of walk, where they had to shift from being the “guide,” a familiar and common position for them, to being the “follower,” which was much more uncommon, if not novel altogether.

In *everyday* walking, it is the adults who guide or negotiate a path, where children are expected to follow the rules, instructed to listen, pay attention to the “real” world and not to the wind and rain that make every street a place of absorption for a child whose eyes are still close to the ground. However, in this embedded walk, adults followed from the rear, being led in trails and footprints of their children who were the knowledgeable ones about this space and terrain. Ingold and Vergunst (2008) state “the continuity of knowledge can be secured only by ensuring that generations overlap in their actual experience of walking the land” (p. 6). This

acknowledgment of children's positionality as an "expert" instigated a different kind of *looking* and *walking*. Parents were called to be a spectator of their children's world. They now had to enter not only by suspending their previous ways of vision but also by acknowledging the expertise of their children.

The embedded walk required parents to suspend their habitual ways of seeing (bracket) and adopt a fresh vision of the world. Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), in reference to Husserl stated, "Since we are so integrally related to the world, the only way for us to grasp ourselves in our relatedness is to suspend this movement, refuse it our complicity (gaze at it *ohne mitzumachen* ['without joining in'], as Husserl often says), or, in other words, put it out of play" (p. 13). While every research in some way or other requires suspending our judgment, giving impartial attention, fostering clear perspective and direct revelation, the parents in this study experienced this suspension of familiarity as "adopting a new set of eyes"—their children's eyes.³¹

For Annie, who is also a teacher at Waldorf School, the playground was a hauntingly familiar space. The embedded walk required her to re-enter with a new set of eyes, that of her children. Macy used a similar visual metaphor, "adopting a different lens" to express the modality she adopted in taking this embedded walk. Like eyes, the lens (of a camera) can be changed, zoomed, and the focus arrested on an object. Lenses allow both a different way of viewing the world and making observation on what is seen. In the sense that we have different ways through which we view the world at different points in our lives, or by varying situations we find ourselves in, we all wear lenses all the time. Heidegger (1977) observes the dilemma of

³¹ Anderson and Braud (2011) cite the work of their student, Rickards, who records patterns of rapid-eye movements, when integrating and analyzing complex material in research.

lenses and frames in his conceptualization of an enframing mode or *Gestell*, arguing that it is what reduces our thinking such that we regard reality solely through a definite and restrictive lens. For Heidegger, it is the enframing mode that extracts entities as resources for regulation, measurement, and controls. It orders and closes possibilities for the disclosure of things and the world. Enframing does not present itself as merely a helpful representation among many possibilities, but rather as the only view. The enframing mode is therefore a totalizing position.

Allison evocatively captured these enframing parental eyes that dominated her interaction with her daughter: “I have my parent eyes on, you know, what is she doing? Is she gonna get hurt?” Similarly, Kathy described that her child climbing the tree was not an easy experience for her, even though she had seen him successfully climb the tree numerous times already. She continued to worry, being automatically alert and prepared to catch him if he was to suddenly fall. She said:

Often times when he climbs those trees, especially there’s one next to this fence it freaks me out [...] I suffer. [...] I’m usually very anxious, and I’m trying to think. I’m going to be here, ready to trap him if he falls. But I’m going to look calm and not anxious, so struggling all the time with my own experience of the thing.

Parent eyes for the mothers primed them to watch with nervousness or to perpetually keep a check on the safety of their child. This was very significant, as it seems that in the enframing mode of parental eyes, the gaze was directed towards *arranging, regulating, and monitoring* not only their children, but also themselves. The pressure of adopting the parental gaze can then impose a deterministic and singular mode of interacting with their child: policing and protecting. In parents’ accounts, we hear that parents often felt they were part of a systemic discourse in which being “a good parent” required one to always keep an eye open and ensure that the child is

safe. Thus, parents needed to frequently be on alert or on guard for the best interest of their child: to catch him when he falls or save her from being hurt. From Allison and Kathy's accounts, we hear that worrying and being concerned are a significant part of their subjectivity as parents. However, Walzer (1996) asserts that worrying is not a parental experience but a critically gendered experience. Walzer notices that worrying is embedded in the socio-political identity and evaluation of the mother: "worrying a lot is what good mothers do" (p.223). While Kathy and Allison did not directly reference the relationality between their gendered identity and their perpetual worry, I cannot simply exclude or ignore the gendered impact of their experience. I also address the gendered relation because mothers are at a greater risk for being blamed and scrutinized for the impact of behavioral, physical, and psychological conditions that affect their child (Cannella, 1999).

The seeds of such discourse have always been present but have found a new scientific legitimacy with the early deprivation studies mentioned previously. Cannella (1999) proposes that early deprivation theory popularized the discourse that parents (mothers) can unintentionally be abusers, neglectful, ignorant, and rejecting. Homes and families needed to be inspected, and parents had to learn a range of practices that could rehabilitate the parent-child dyad. Through the language of support, social welfare technicians regulate and define how parents need to make their environment safe for the child, how much time they need to spend with their children, how to structure play activities, and how to censor not only their language, but also that of their children. Therefore, the early deprivation studies not only created the pressure that parents should maintain an optimal distance with their children, but also made parents feel that they

needed to be the police, the worrier, or the protector³². These pressures may help us understand the power that the other's gaze held for Kathy and Allison. To close their eyes and risk the possibility of a mishap or breach of their child's safety could possibly result in being judged as bad parents. Now, instead of outside surveillance, the expert watchdog is inside. The unintended consequence of such discourses can be that parents might internalize policing discourses of self-blaming, scrutiny, guilt, anxiety, and a strict standard of perfection (even though often termed as "good enough") created and to be judged by others. In surveilling themselves, they perhaps can cripple their ability to intimately be present to their children's experience from a place that feels authentically defined by their unique relational position. One of the possible consequence of such a determined vision of parent-child interaction may be that it risks foreclosing other experiential possibilities of experiencing intimacy and showing concern for their child.

In the worry "will they hurt" or "will they fall down", we also can inadvertently construct children in the parochial label of a passive subject. Positioning children as only passive subjects can take away their agency to author their own experiences, as well as undermine their potential to respond thoughtfully to their environment. To prevent us from the fallacy of forming a deterministic definition of childhood, Postman (1982/1994) contends that our present assumptions of childhood are actually a byproduct of literacy. The introduction of literacy created a split between those who knew secrets of the reading and social order and those who did not. Thus, contemporary childhood was created, and the child had to be shielded from the adult world by the responsible, literate adult who gradually introduces her to the risks of the adult

³² Although these services have been regulatory, it is important to acknowledge that they have been crucial in providing assistance for families and removing children from very troubling circumstances.

world. Also, with the historical rise in prominence of the private, nuclear family, the major responsibilities of childrearing and wellbeing moved from the neighborhoods and community to the private world of the family. This diminished the ownership and accountability of neighborhoods and other institutions to make the public spaces safe and accessible for children, transferring these duties primarily to parents. These values of protection have consequently not only separated children from communal life, but have had detrimental and disastrous consequences for children who live in diverse socio-cultural contexts.³³ A most notable example is the international boycott of products from Bangladesh, produced with the involvement of children (Jenks, 1996). The boycott seriously impacted the Bangladeshi garment industry, where children were involved in harmless work such as thread cutting or distributing garments that in turn paid for their school fee. As a result, the international boycott for the protection of childhood marginalized children into riskier domains such as prostitution.

The universal and unitary understanding of risk only in the narrative of protection undermines other experiential meanings that risk has in the life of children and parents. By roaming, exploring, protecting, and projecting themselves outwards in the world, children discover the ability to move beyond their comfort zones, learn skills to stay safe and deal with the challenges of the world. Children's accounts added that this capacity to take risks is intrinsically tied to relationality. Kathy described that her 7-year-old son enjoyed having her as an "audience, so I felt it was an enjoyable experience. Like look, what I can do, and look. Like all these things that I have practiced. Taking pride in it." In noticing his mother watch him climb

³³ It is important to assert that my conclusion and statements about western and nonwestern childhood can create another bifurcation and overgeneralization that is counterproductive to this project. Therefore, I assert that my reflections are meant to capture the impact of hegemonic values and its impact in the subjective and political lives of children and parents.

the tree, he showed her risky, practiced, and unforeseen adventures. Kathy interprets this excitement and desire to show as “I do this all the time you know. You might not know this but this is something I do.” In performing acts, what his mother considers being risky, he notices her eyes too— “he likes to see me. Me being anxious.” Thus, he is now not just an object of her gaze, but on the top of the tree he can watch her being concerned. He might have experienced their deep relational bond of care. In play, risk and care are etymologically rooted. Klein (1971) states that play is related etymologically to the Old English *pleoh* meaning “to expose to danger or risk,” and to the Dutch *plegen* meaning “to care for, and be accustomed to” (p. 568). In mother’s eyes, there is now an interest to look and care and she begins to see how risk is inextricably tied to her child’s confidence and pride that he is capable and competent of behaviors that are considered unanticipated, risky, and threatening to an adult.

The (in) sight into the child’s world is achieved by bracketing the perspective that demands that parents “keep an eye on” or keep the child “under the eye” and embrace an altered vision—a new set of eyes. Kathy’s account captured the embodied transformation she experienced as she re-entered the playground trying to see from her child’s perspective (child’s eyes). She elaborated that, as a mother, the playground and play were intimately familiar to her, having walked this space and watched her son play several times. Even before taking the embedded walk, she was confident that her child would repeat the drill of climbing the tree—a certainty that also assured her of their deep trustful bond. However, as her child re-climbed the tree during the embedded walk, and she felt the predictability and surety of experience, her anxiety (“freaking out”), fear of her child falling, and her preparedness to catch him, she experienced an altered way of being, “Like I’m truly observing.” In reminding herself that “I was not being the mother, I was just following,” in taking a leap from her concern and nervousness to

an eye keyed on his experience, she noticed that the mundane climbing had metamorphosed for her. With joy flowing through her bright smile as she narrated this experience to me, she exclaimed:

But this time I was supposed to be truly observing him, right? So, I remember very distinctly recognizing his happiness at being up there. How proud he was of. Am I good at this or what, am I not the biggest thing in Earth at that moment? You know, he had that look. He was up there, and he was higher than anyone. He looked so proud and having to write it and be looking at him rather than having to be the mother. Wanting to catch the kid. I had noticed before how proud it makes him. Which is the only reason why I allow him to do it, even though I'm freaking out. With him doing it, but I was able to appreciate it at another level just because I was supposed to be observing that. Like his interaction with it. [...] It was just that it allowed me to be there in his experience more fully. It is the first time I felt happy."

During the embedded walk, Kathy observed in a special manner, as if embodying empathic transfer from her son's world. With a bright, playful smile, she described that this was the first time she was able to witness her child's world, truly see it, in a way different than all the other times it was simply a child climbing a tree as a somewhat nervous and anxious mom looks on. As he sat on the tree, she felt connected with her child, experiencing his happiness, his thrill, and the bodily expansion of being gigantic (adult). She reflects that in that encounter of empathic watching, she was enchanted by a reverie of him shouting back to her "look mother, I am big or what?" In hearing her child and living his happiness, with this new perspective, Kathy understood why climbing the tree was important to her son and the expansion it gave to the little child in the adult world. She articulated this empathetic transference from "he is big" to "I am

big.” Such an embodied understanding brought an important metamorphosis in the politics of the everyday as now the world of her child (other) was not an abstract intellectual fact but lived in her (one’s) body. Liberty and transformation, as Freire (1970) reminds us, rest in perceiving the context of the margins from the eyes of the oppressed which cannot be captured by the objectivity of words— “Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity” (p. 71). The embedded walk did not just result in mere data collection but in deeper transformation where the world that was *othered* could be lived by the *other*.

Kathy recalled that the walk around the tree was familiar for her, but now it took on a new significance; she was seeing her child differently as if for the first time. She was now able to notice the smile; the world opened in new ways and more as seen and the visible things and experiences conferred validity, subjectivity, and acknowledgment that was not previously present in her world. The call of the embedded walk was a move away from the enframed mode to a mode of seeing based on revelation of the world of their child. It is this mode of magic, surprise, and revelation that Heidegger (1971) called *poesis*. The embedded walk was a re-discovery into new ways of being where mothers could follow their child’s world at their child’s pace. Such a following re-acquainted them to new ways of being responsive to their child’s world, moving away from that which was restricted in the mode of control to that which was embedded in the release of that control and receiving the unforeseen possibilities of an encounter. It was through encountering the difference of the world of their children and in adopting the lens of mystery that mothers were able to learn a different mode was possible to interact with their children. In doing so, they noticed the diversity of ways in which their children inhabited the world.

Theme: Distinctive Receptivity

“They saw it with new eyes.” While the mothers experienced the embedded walk as adopting different eyes, the de-monopolization of expertise was also experienced by children as having a new set of eyes. Mothers noticed the excitement in their children’s eyes and attributed it to them being recognized as the expert.³⁴ Annie described that the embedded walk felt different than an ordinary walk in the playground as her children “saw it with new eyes.” She attributed this new set of eyes to the rarity of being asked their opinion about their play spaces. She said:

I think in some ways they saw it with new eyes because they were being asked about it. [...] I think they also were going about it differently than they would on a regular day going outside. It was a big job. I think to be able to be invited to [...] They were the guides.”

Liz also noticed the excitement and thrill her child experienced in showing her spaces “they are never asked about, so she was excited to show me.” The mothers reflected that this excitement and motivation visible in their eyes was because “someone asked them” about their views, communicating “their opinion counts.” Freire (1970) reminds us that political transformation

³⁴ It is also important to deconstruct the usage of the word “expertise,” popular in research with children. A well-intended word, it tries to transfer power to those whose authority over their experience has not been accepted. However, adoption of the word “expertise” does seem to stem from our scientific tradition where an authoritative, sophisticated scholar can grasp and speak “the truth.” While I do not question children’s authority to speak and grasp their experience, it is important to be mindful that the embrace of the word does not rest in the adult-centric notion of what kind of voice should be heard. In re-thinking the usage of the word expertise, one needs to return the word to its etymology, a person wise through experience (etymological dictionary). Such an acknowledgment does not consider an expert to dig through a concrete truth, but opens the possibility of voice and experience as a dynamic process, and reasserts that the very essence of voice is its dynamism.

resides in “those who have in the past so often been the mere objects of investigation, themselves become the agents of their own transformation (p. 159).” Children are often not regarded as the most important sources of information about their own lives in this way, certainly by an adult. It was obvious that the realization made them highly motivated to share this expertise. It is important to acknowledge that children were always an expert; mothers asked them questions and children, being trusted and respected for their thoughts, brought their expertise into the forefront of their parent’s world.

Thus, empowerment and political voice is an inter-dependent space. Presence of the “other” is a pre-requisite to voice in a discursive space. It is through the eyes of the seer that children also witness their own expertise, “For ordinary vision is a blending of two unique vistas, two perspectives, two eyes” (Abram, 1996, p. 125). Voice or speech is an inter-subjective phenomenon. We speak (or show) because there is someone to listen. Voice is also an inter-subjective phenomenon because power shapes whose voice is worthy of being heard or not. In listening to their children, the mothers acknowledged the right of the “other” to speak to them: treating the other as a *being* to be met and not an object to be viewed, tolerated, controlled (Schwandt, 2007), or disregarded. From the positionality of children’s voice being vulnerable to be erased or lost in an adult world, a new trajectory of speech opened up where parents as an authoritative speaking subject took a back seat, communicating that their children’s voice, opinion, and views mattered and were welcomed. Though many other factors might have also contributed to this voice of expertise, it seems that the acknowledgment of their children’s expertise was an important movement towards recovering an important status of acknowledgment that all too often, or even almost always, gets lost in the adult world. In being

asked about their experience, some children uncovered a newfound sense of freedom to interact with their parents where they were in command rather than being commanded.

Theme: Distinctive Ways of Asking

“We don’t get answer to questions.” During the embedded walk, the mothers encountered organically invoked commentaries, memories, experiences, and practices that were not present in everyday conversations. They noticed that daily conversations around their children’s routine or play mostly did not resonate with their children’s natural way of being, which evoked short single word responses. Macy attributed adult-centric questions of “why” and “what” as the reason for these monosyllabic responses, for example, when she asked, “who did he play with or what interesting things did you do or whatever.” For Liz, the absence of long, detailed responses by her 5-year-old daughter was credited to memory and forgetting: “kids’ memories are kind of locked in, by the time she is home she is on to other things and not really thinking about the sort of things.” In contrast, Kathy noticed that despite her child being a good communicator who often shares long detailed conversations about his day with her, his sharing was limited to “extremely important” events. Experiences, play, and narratives that were not “extreme” did not reach her ears. She said:

He usually shows me only the stuff that he’s over excited and cannot help showing me [...]. But the things that were not as extreme that don’t warrant him to explicitly tell me, you have to come and check this out. Or that even probably I don’t warrant worth going after [...] But these gave a purpose for that.

The mothers’ observations that the normative (adult-centric), verbal way of engaging with their children did not reveal a “detailed report” of their lives speak to the interconnection between experiences and embodiment. The adult centric conversations can magnify the dialectical

relationship between the child and the adult instead of promoting a shared and egalitarian perspective or connection. Recalling the stories after play and the intellectualization of play through adults' cognitive questions (e.g. What happened? Who did they play with?), tends to exist in the realm of literacy, where the experience is not lived but written or talked about in a distant and decontextualized setting. In such an adult-centric conversation, children were asked to describe play, places, and routines, rather than invite the prober (parent) into multi-sensory events of textures, smells, and vision.³⁵ The children's difficulties in articulating stories of their lives to their mothers were not simply due to the failure of memory or verbalization as the adults had conceptualized it, but rather a difference in the mode of expression. The recall of the senses of smell, vision, places, and friends that play elicits cannot be re-created in the questions of "how." The child's play cannot be represented in structured formulas of words and sentences because it is a habitual act— "habit is neither a matter of knowledge nor an automatism, it is knowledge that resides in the hands, that yields itself up only to bodily effort, and that cannot be translated into an objective formula" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 139). The verbal language used during after-school hours perhaps did not match this fullness of experience and failed to capture the enthrallment of the embedded life of the walk, where the body and its engagement with space came alive.

The child's way of being and speaking is not just words but is intertwined with the perceptive bodies and the local spaces. His or her language is embedded in the phenomenal world and world of the senses. In the culture of the child, the place already speaks. Its voice and

³⁵ With respect to research, we can understand that conversation after school hours tends to have the same structure as the verbal interviews that foster static encounters in which talking becomes the center of attention and other activities (such as embodiment and play) are either perceived as a distraction or pushed into the background.

gestures do not have to be explained but are meaningful speech itself. To define the play or the action is to be separate from the phenomena, where neither the tree nor the person is an active subject. The child cannot recall an experience, list of items, and events without context.

However, for the child, the difficulty to recall is not a deficiency in memory but that after school the invitation of sensory encounter, story, and play belong to a different place, and their sensory fullness and emotional depth fade when the child is not present there.

On the other hand, embedded walking invited both the parents and children to go the spontaneous ways of children's inhabitation. Kathy elaborated that during the embedded walk she experienced the stories and the narration coming to life, saying, "I had heard these stories but now I could see it with images." The world of the dweller came alive because the embedded walk was in the play spaces, the lived field where the conversations, context, and stimulus (places and things) for what is talked about is present. The child was not required to make referential definitions or recall their play as an afterthought in dialogue. For the child, speech was woven into experience. It was not simply words, but the verbalized experience came alive through what Merleau-Ponty (1968) calls the synergy of senses.

In the mothers' descriptions, the metaphor of "vision" in particular captured the perspicacity of grasping their children's world that was present in the walk but absent in "talking." The representation of the visible was connoted both in terms of watching that made the experience real and the visibility (getting to know) of that which was hidden. Kathy captured the relation between vision and grasping when she stated, "Just by seeing it, it became real." Similarly, Macy also felt that the embedded walk made the experience more valid, as "I got to

see.”³⁶ Levinas (1983/1998) contends that the act of intelligibility is similar to a keen eye. To see is to witness a truth. This structurality of vision and truth is present in the very the notion of “evidence,” “from sight.” Laubscher (2010) notes that sight enjoys a hegemonic privilege in the hierarchy of the senses regarding knowledge. The privileging of vision and comprehension is reflected by simple everyday affirmations such as “I see what you mean.” Peperzak (1993) states, “Eye and hand, optical and grasping gestures, dominate our contact with things...They are present—even verbally—in its ideas, concepts, conceptions, visions, comprehensions, perspectives, views, etc.” (p. 162). To comprehend is to illuminate the world, to bring the object of study to light, to make it available to the gestures of vision and grasp. Kathy and Macy’s descriptions also bring forth that vision (eyes), walk, and attention are deeply intertwined phenomena. As Wallace (1993) suggests, “walking returns the walker to his [her] senses” (p. 187). The human’s progression to the upright posture transforms attention into active determined ways (Simms, 2008; Straus, 1966). The upright posture alters the perception of the eyes, fostering flexibility as movement changes location, which rapidly shifts the experiential horizon.

³⁶ However, one can also argue that the hegemony of visual metaphors is a byproduct of the pre-eminence accorded to the visual sense in Western culture. The western empiricism or modern preoccupation is with looking, where knowledge is characterized as a seizure by way of the act of grasp—that which is real is capable of being seen by the naked eye can be grasped (Mirzoeff, 1999). This rush to grasp the “real” by the naked eye was soon labeled as subjective, and photography became an important tool in colonized history to categorize human races and as simple truth revealing (Mirzoeff, 1999). However, I argue that the embedded walk resisted such grasping and totalizing. During the walk it was not just vision, but a whole sensory experience that came into play and engaged both parents and children. The embodied body and the synaesthetic experience the walk creates, resists an easy understanding of the child’s world as a totalizing grasp by the singular lens of sight. Such a sensory invitation opened the parents (mothers) to “grasp” the world of their child and yet the dynamism of the play resists this very totalization.

During the walk, in contrast to a static conversation, perception was continually transformed. The embedded walk welcomed (the walkers) to wander, observe, monitor, remember, listen, touch, crouch, or climb. Through the walk both the dweller (the child) and the visitor moved place to place on foot and the place of inhabitation and dweller became more present to themselves and their places. During play, the gestures, facial expressions, seeing, and even tasting and hearing the stories were animated. During the embedded walk, play and speech were also interdependent as children and parents shared the same interpersonal context. The walk was in the play spaces, the lived field where the conversations, context, and stimuli for what was talked about, such as the places and objects in those places, were present. Walking through the play spaces, the affordances of places, memory of friends, and the character and relationality with things evoked stories and actions that inhabited the space. The play came alive and was recalled in the actions of the senses, body, and felt experience that does not need the description of the word but can be re-acquainted and re-created. The story and the play breathed in the play spaces also communicated significance through the gestures of the child as the mothers could now witness their child's happiness, joy, and disappointments as they walked through the spaces.

Liz noted the difference between “talking” and “taking the walk” as a thoughtful interruption to her assumptions about how and what her child might be playing. She recounted, “She'll talk about specifically what she was doing, whereas watching her you get so much information I wasn't aware of.” She described that if she would have just spoken to her child, she would have assumed that like other children of her age and gender, her child was playing “house or family.” However, in taking the walk, she witnessed the creative, thoughtful, unimagined ways in which her daughter engaged with the undetermined possibilities of the space. With surprise and humility, she said, “I didn't know that they had thought about it in that way.” If the

body is the means through which we experience and feel the world, it is through this embedded walk that mothers encountered “surprise” about their children’s engagement with the space and, in turn, their identity. For Macy, witnessing her child’s interests in places shift from the Little Friends Program to nursery made her realize that her son was growing. She noticed that places or instruments, such as the sandbox, beloved to him when young, no longer fascinated him. She said:

I was a little surprised that he didn’t seem to like the sandbox in the back because it seems like when he was in the Little Friends Programs and I picked him up he was always in that sandbox. But maybe he just grew into and once he was in the nursery program he didn’t like it. So, that was a little interesting, like maybe he is outgrown that.

This reminded her of how he was growing up, a realization that was not present to her in the everyday. For Allison, the walk through the space made “visible” her child’s desire to separate. With tears and warmth in her eyes, she expressed how she might have missed her child’s daily signs that communicated a request for distance but the embedded walk made this request present to her. Likewise, Annie articulated that the embedded walk allowed her to walk through different aspects of her twin children’s personalities. During the walk, she noticed that her son, whom she thought of as an introvert, engaged in more active and risky play, whereas her other son, whom she thought of as more “risky,” chose quieter spaces. She reflected:

Part of what was surprising is I think of one of them as more of sort of the risky, like I would think he would be drawn to the monkey bars and the swing[...] And it was his brother who I think of as more of the passive one, he chose the monkey bars as his favorite spot and the other, I don’t remember what he chose as his favorite spot but it was a quiet place [...] I would have expected him to pick the active engagement place.”

Space, play, and identity are deeply interconnected phenomena. It is the place that breaks ground for what kind of activities (or ways of being and becoming) are allowed (rules) and possible. Thus, relationality with space during the embedded walk cultivated mothers' reflections on the multiplicity of their children's identities, such as how their children were growing, how their preferences were changing, and subtle nuances of their identities. As I have already discussed in Chapter Three, for the child, the self is not interior, but lived and reflected back in play and spaces. Through their participation with the place, the children not only discovered the possibilities that the place provides (each place calling for different action and different self), but also an understanding of their own selves. As the child engages with places and things, she not only integrates parts of herself, but also gains access to new parts of herself. Children often live in restricting and determined places, and thus these special play spaces offered their bodies an opportunity to engage with the world in active and instrumental ways, leading them to express parts of their selves that were not present in other spaces. Being in these lived spaces, in the embedded walk, the mothers were able to witness these parts that were not evident in other spaces and thus were introduced to the unexpected parts of their children's identities. As the parents were invited into their children's play spaces, they were able to witness parts of their children's selves that were integrated and formed by places and thus were not available to them in their everyday life.

The embedded walk fostered a space to bring about reflection that their children's identities were different and developing in ways other than they had imagined. Their children were introverted, extroverted, and creative. The walk perhaps made it difficult for them to hold their children in those imagined, fixed categories. The essence of the embedded walk was that through an encounter with their children, the mothers were continuously surprised as the walk

interrupted their pre-determined meanings and totalizing practices. The act challenged an easy recourse to familiar or fixed concepts, classification, or reductive ways of comprehending their children. Via the embedded walk, the mothers encountered the radical otherness of their children, which could not be reduced to finite categories, but rather whose very radical and infinite otherness questions our ability to comprehend and grasp the other in exhaustive knowledge. Levinas (1981) calls this meeting a moment of encounter with the other: “The face to face encounter ruptures my ego, eludes thematization and formalizations and dissolves the capacity to possess and master the other. Instead of grasping, one must take responsibility for the other and this relation, which is one of welcoming of the other as stranger” (Dahlberg and Moss, 2004, p. 80). Derrida (1999) says that the concept of welcoming, a word frequently used by Levinas, opens the way for another word: hospitality. Such a grasping or hospitality offers that our understanding of children is comparable to the hand that grasps the sands with confidence—the sand flows through, yet impressions and traces of the sand remain as memories of graspability.

However, it is not grasping (that always connotes a threat of violence, acquisition, and comprehension), but rather the gentle touch, what Levinas (1961) calls the caress, with which the parents touch children’s world and landscape. For Levinas (1961/1979):

The caress consists in seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escape its form towards a future that is never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though *were not yet*. It *searches*, it forages. It is not an intentionality of disclosure but of search: a movement toward the invisible [...] What the caress seeks is not situated in a perspective and in the light of the graspable. (p. 257-258 italics in original).

Levinas (1987) writes about the caress³⁷ as a way of (not quite) touching or reaching the “other,” and it being both a communicative and an ethical act— “What is caressed is not touched, properly speaking” (p. 89). To caress is to be both active and expressive, while concurrently being receptive and responsive. Caress in this way (as opposed to the philosophical framework of vision), embeds the capacity to affect, be affected, feel proximity, openness and engagement with the other. Caress as a gesture is naïve and preliminary with its mode remaining beyond pre-determined knowledge and continuing to be untouched by the mastery of the other. As opposed to separateness and supposed autonomy, the caress is always a folding and unfolding again towards a futurity of what is to come, “To the fleeting touch of what has not yet found a setting” (Irigaray, 2001, p. 120). It is the caress that fosters the possibility of waiting, and in which self is revived, gathered, and not enclosed. Therefore, caress is an intimacy which does not claim consumption or possession of the child’s world, but is an anticipation, a seeking out and affirmation of otherness of children’s world. It is also in the caress in which the boundaries of the parental self is affirmed by the child (other), giving back the gift of self in return and inviting the

³⁷ Most feminist authors have been critical of Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity*, especially the sections titled “Habitation and Feminine” and “The Phenomenology of Eros” (where he discusses the caress in depth) for the patriarchal language that ties women in the traditional role of maternity and the household. According to de Beauvoir (1989), by labeling the male as subject and the female as the other, Levinas re-creates the androcentric viewpoint where masculinity is privileged. Irigaray (1991) also echoes de Beauvoir’s criticism in reflecting that Levinas’s description of the Eros “presents man as the sole subject exercising his desire and his appetite upon the woman who is deprived of subjectivity except to seduce him” (p. 115). The notion of femininity also becomes difficult to comprehend as it is re-interpreted in each stage of his work. Eros and the feminine are dominant concepts in *Time and Other*, where the feminine is referred to as the other par excellence. However, the feminine is relegated to the margins in *Totality and Infinity*, where the woman merely inhabits the dwelling, as a welcoming, discreet, or silent other (Perpich, 2001). The relationship to alterity is no longer conceived as an erotic relationship occurring in the caress, but as an ethical relationship that can only be accomplished in language (Levinas, 1961/1979).

self “to become what I have not yet become” (Irigaray, 2001, p.121). The caress does not originate from myself but is a gift of the other to the self. To put it differently, I can only touch or stroke the other, but it is the other who affirms whether my touch is a caress, a poke or a violation (L. Laubscher, personal communication, February, 16, 2018). The gift of my touch as caress is always from the other, the other’s to give (gift) me—that I am caressing and not touching, is not mine to determine but theirs to affirm. I am, as such, given by the other; my subjectivity, myself, is the gift of the other’s.

The mobility of the walk—the sensory experience that brings forth the lived world, and the re-discovery of their children’s worlds and identities—was aimed towards the humbleness of an understanding that remains forever incomplete, open, and malleable—an understanding that values incomplete understanding (Gadamer, 1975/2006). We must listen to pedagogy and see it, rather than “possess” it. As Van Manen (1990) says, “Pedagogy is something that a parent or teacher must continuously redeem, retrieve, regain, recapture in the sense of recalling” (p. 149). As referenced before, in our post-modern world where representation seems to drive meaning and sense making, it becomes even more of an imperative to attend to “the limits of representation” (Farley, 2004, p. 328) for the possibility of ethical engagement right there, at those borders. The embedded walk interrupted the self that was known by the mothers, and prevented them from boxing their children into fixed categories.

Theme: Distinctive Ways of Listening

“Listen to me.” However, eyes are not simply pertinent to, or involved in, the world of vision, but also as Abram (1996) reminds us, strongly connected to the ear. We are drawn together, we feel ourselves listening with our eyes and watching with our ears, responding with our whole body. For some mothers, the embodied adoption of their children’s eyes and trust in

their expertise also manifested in listening. Kathy likened the transformation she underwent watching her child play to listening with sincerity. She described that in watching him play, she realized the depth of this experience for him. It was not now merely “climbing of the tree” but an activity that was “really important.” Interpreting her child’s experience of climbing the tree, she paraphrased what he said: “This is one place that I chose. This is my most favorite thing ever when I’m at school. Which is most of my time.” After the embedded walk, his mundane everyday experience of climbing the tree seemingly transformed her response to her child’s activities. Now when he asks her to show her his places, witness his play or listen to him, she understands the depth of his request. She added, “Like, there’s this acknowledgment, like, listen to me. That’s what I meant about his right to ask for this.” For Annie, this listening was fostered by witnessing simple grievances that were obvious to her children but were absent to her eyes. Annie articulated the frustration of her children who complained about the undesired movement of the tire swing—spinning instead of moving back and forth. With amusement to her own ignorance of not noticing the simplicity and obviousness of her children’s demand, she said: “Like, oh great, a swing that just swings.” She had not heard of such a demand before, as it was not present in her vision or to her ears. Liz and Annie listened to their children as if listening for the first time. Dahlberg and Moss (2004) state that such a listening is respect for an absolute otherness, a respect that must precede grasping, stating, “the child speaks and is doing, and we have to take what the child says and does seriously” (p. 100). Such a listening is not easy, Rinaldi (2006) cautions, as it disrupts the listener’s world. The foundation of such a way of listening, Gadamer (1975/2000) reminds us, is “to experience the Thou truly as a Thou i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us” (p. 361).

Such nuanced and ethical ways of listening not only interrupt the familiarity of the listener's world, but also require openness to things that oppose or challenge us. Kathy, Annie, and Macy realized that while the embedded walk initiated the significance and right of listening to their children, their hunger and tiredness still overpowered them, and they were still confronted by the desire to rush home. The parents were continuously called out of the comfort of their everyday self-concern and asked to respond to the call of their child. Thus, their children's voice was then a possible interruption or disruption to their self-centric understanding of the world. The reflections received during the embedded walk stayed with the parents, reminding them that their children's world might often get ignored and marginalized in their "busyness." However, the children's speech was an "interruption" to the previously comfortable ways in which the mothers (parents) could presumably unintentionally overlook their children's needs. They became conscious and reflective of both the everyday demands that took a toll on them and their children's desire to be listened to. The embedded walk persisted in their lives as an echo of the call of the other (the child) that is ever present in the eminently concrete moment of the day. Each of the mothers in the study, in one way or the other, noted a felt sense of becoming more centered on their children's needs. They were also able to recover simpler ways of integrating their children's world into their lives, such as slowing down after school, listening to their children's conversation more attentively, or taking the time to visit the places and the play they wanted to share with them. This transformation in their listening was related to the understanding of the relevance of small gestures and moments in their children's lives. While the more conscious relationship with the things, places, and play did help them re-structure, appreciate, and attend to the meaningfulness of their children's world, the mothers also accepted their own limits. This call to respond also did not necessarily result in a simple yes to the request

of the child. Kathy articulated, “sometimes I tell him no, but I know that he’s doing it from a place of “This is important.” The call to respond was not only in saying “yes” but also sometimes saying “no.” Her response is therefore not in a simple no or yes, but also in realization of the importance of her child’s voice that rested in the everyday. While earlier this realization might have been implicitly present in her worldview, she was now conscious of the impact of her saying yes or no.

“Record their thoughts.” While eyes became the tool for observation, writing on the ensemble voice transformed this gestural embodiment to a reflective stance (Jarvis 1997; Robinson, 1989). Writing is like walking on the text. According to Michel de Certeau (1984), writing is “an itinerant, progressive and regulated practice or walk” (p. 134). Macy described her experience of taking notes during the embedded walk as adding “observation” and “attention” that she does not have in everyday life. She revealed that even though she works as a professional researcher, she does not approach her life or her child with similar (embodied) awareness, explaining, “I don’t have a personal journal or anything like that, so I don’t do that with my kid.” As she moved into the outside world of the playground, the ensemble voice and the pen became tools that fostered interior wandering (“nothing enlightening [...] different level of consciousness”) for the familiar world. The writing fostered the consciousness to delve into questions, look at and carefully attend to her child’s experience without distraction for the long stretch of the embedded walk. Having the pen and the paper helped her to really stay with the experience and be present as an observer to the world that surrounded her and her child. Annie also noticed a similar process where her children’s walk with an “official paper” to “record their thoughts” cultivated a different orientation to their play space. She said, “So knowing that they had an official say into place and then official piece of paper to record their thoughts on, made

them very intentional about how they were looking at things and what they were doing.” In writing on the ensemble voice, some children and parents gave life to the diverse footprints through the gestural movement of the hand. Writing became a meditative process, nurturing slowness and distance from the everyday, helping children and parents reconnect to the immediate environment.

The embodied nature of writing is a dynamic act. In writing, much like in speech, the words and hands are not a mere garment of thought but facilitate a constructive process that sustains and builds thought. It is through and with writing that children and parents not only re-enter their world as scribe, but the newness of their world comes alive. Van Manen (1990) illustrates the tension in writing that abstracts our experience of the world, yet also concretizes our understanding of it—how it distances us from the life world, but at the same time draws us more closely to it: “To write means to write myself, not in a narcissistic sense but in a deep collective sense [...] the untiring effort to author a sensitive grasp of being itself” (p. 132). Words like “fixing it” and “official paper” on the ensemble voice also capture that the etiology of writing fosters experiences as permanent, fixed, and un-erasable. It is worth noting that even though the ensemble voice encouraged children to communicate their experiences using any medium, such as through drawing or writing, most children used writing (sometimes even monosyllables) as the primary mode of expression.³⁸ Even when some children drew, they used text to complement or elaborate the meaning of their drawing.

³⁸ It is also worth mentioning that Derrida (1980) would consider drawing or any other marking left by the child as writing itself. To the extent that writing is a mark, a marking, an inscription, a fixing, a standing in for something, it constitutes writing proper.

While such an adherence to writing can be considered as obeying an adult mode of communication, it is important to reveal the politics of voice inherent in it. Adrienne Rich (1950/1970) reminds us of the paradoxical necessity of using the language of the oppressor in order to be heard, averring, in her poem: *this is the oppressor's language, yet I need it to talk to you*. Language is a site of political struggle. The affordance offered by the fixity of words is needed by the child whose spoken words are under the threat of being dismissed or misunderstood. Such a dismissal could be risked since children were writing to preserve their places. Writing on the ensemble voice offered the possibility to not only express *multiple* places of interest to the child but also *multiple* places to preserve. Annie articulated this struggle of her children to mark their places with a single pin on the child-map³⁹. She revealed how marking a single place felt like a loss:

They wanted to mark lots of places, and we wrote more things on the paper [...] Because then, when they were outside they were like I like this and I like this and were really enthusiastic about lots of things so that was having to decide was hard and then they had to pinpoint just one [...]. We talked about it a lot beforehand because all three of them came to it with this idea of if we say we don't like something, the school might decide to take it away.

Thus, the ensemble voice, with its possibility to trace polymorphous voices, came as a saving grace for the children who identified that the implicit reason to write was to preserve and honor their spaces.

³⁹ I will be discussing the politics of such a singularity in Chapter five.

Writing has been a powerful tool of the colonizer asserting hegemony by inscribing, erasing, and re-writing history, narratives, and cultures of the other or writing in a way that others (Smith, 1999). With the advent of participatory communication theory in the 1970s, and incited by the poststructuralist critique, “the indignity of speaking for others” (Deleuze, as quoted in Foucault, 1977, p. 209), was complicated and readdressed by passing the tools of visual production (the pencil, the camera, or the video camera) into the hands of the subject. During the embedded walk, it is the one whose narratives are often “othered” who grasps the pen to mark and save their own territories. Thus, in de-scribing, the child re-inscribes territories and experiences erased by the other. The ensemble voice was then perhaps a sort of memoir because of its possibility to contain multiple voices and prevent a construction of homogenous space. Such an embedded practice questions the ideology of understanding space and world as static, thus deconstructing the very power that maintains hegemony. It is imperative to challenge the construction of a unitary and static understanding of the child’s world, especially when the creation of homogenous histories and territories were a necessary condition to grasp and conquer the territory of the other (Huggan, 1989; Smith, 1999).

Thus, writing on the ensemble voice preserved an experience that cannot be simply erased, and even when words could be crossed out, scribbled over, the traces continued to haunt the emotional discourse of the school. Rebecca Solnit (2001) argues that “narrative writing is closely bound up with walking precisely because, just as with following footsteps, it allows one to read the words of someone—the author—who has gone before” (p. 72). The quality of permanence offered historicity, or a trust that their voices and traces of their places will not be erased. Children’s voices and writings of their experience have largely been left out of the cultural conversation; their needs, opinions, intentions, and experiences have mostly been

theorized by adults or institutions or left unarticulated and unrecorded. While writing has been traditionally a colonialist (adult) tool, in the embedded walk the ensemble sheet and the pen were catalysts in legitimating children's right to articulate and come to their own voice. Moreover, with its quality of permanence it assured that their experience, their voice, their place will not be erased, modified, marginalized, or forgotten in the discourse of the school.

Theme: Distinctive Spaces

“School became bigger.” Research always has elements of walking: searching again, anew, going about again, or circling around. Taking these steps in the political playground, one hopes to meet a trickster who interrupts one's path playfully and mischievously and opens gateways of awareness, gifting us with insights. These spaces, and the practices they engender, are relational, drawing attention to the multiple subjectivities that make up these spaces and the potential for such inter-subjective spaces to “transform” both self and other, as well as the context itself. In re-entering the playground, both children and the mothers encountered a transformation in themselves and in their relationality with the space. This revisiting of the grounds became critical in re-inscribing territories and imprinting their footprints on the playgrounds. The mothers considered these re-inscriptions as distinct from the everyday as their children showed them places and play that mothers were not aware of. Annie noticed that as her feet automatically moved to the early childhood play yard, a space she had often witnessed her children play, her kids resisted her assertion with a “no”—“No we know what's in there, we do not want to go there.” Similarly, Allison noticed that her child chose not to show her the usual monkey bars on which she had repeatedly seen her play. She justified this incongruence as “some part of her mind says well, she knows I like the monkey bars.” Thus, children marked this embedded walk to show their parents “special status” places; that which had not yet been shared.

Annie associated the children's decision to show new places with the fact that the embedded walk did not restrict their movement to specified territories. She elaborated how the walk was unusual from school hours where children were transported from one designated place to another at a specific time, that is, "getting to places they are shepherded and they are in that space, that spot." Usually they are never told that the whole playground can belong to them and that there are unclaimed spaces that can be their own — "no teacher says okay go wherever you want, anywhere on the grounds you can go." Thus, an invitation to trespass prohibited territories (to go anywhere they want) and show anything they wish, fostered ownership and a sense of reclaiming of place.

Annie's description reveals some ways that school and school hours shape bodily and spatial experience. In the school hours and in school spaces, children are mostly subjected to restricting ways in which they can spend their time in a definite space. The conceivable authority of the teacher and the instrument of the curriculum maps out the children's spatial, temporal, and bodily experience, scripting where, when, how, and what of the children's school life. The colonization of the children's spaces also resulted in the colonization of their lived experience, as they were not only told how to be, but who to be with, thereby restricting possibilities of what to explore and how to explore. The Waldorf School's implicit rules designated which part of the school they could enter freely. In such a system, the child is free to explore the spaces and their personhood but only in determined and controlled settings. Such a close implementation of spatial conditions controls, isolates, separates and regulate childhood making it easy to keep an eye during school hours.

It is the desire and need to have spaces in which children have the freedom to cultivate their imagination and their subjectivity apart from adult structures that leads to what Langeveld

(1983) calls indeterminate spaces. One can argue that through the walk the children were able to show their parents indeterminate and unstructured spaces where children found peace, contentment, and freedom to engage with their world, their places, and their bodies as they choose. These special status places served as a clearing and living of freedom in which they could engage with their experience and their selves separate from the influence of others. Again, the embedded walk created the possibility of inhabiting different time and different engagement with the space, as children were free to explore their play spaces without the everyday surveillance and disciplinary gaze of others. They were not directed or “shepherded” by adults, but were simply followed.

In such an embedded walk, the mothers and children found themselves noticing spaces that they had not recognized before, expanding their territorial boundaries. As Kathy remarked, “it made the playground bigger.” For Liz, the embedded walk introduced her to play spaces that were dormant or previously thought of as unused space, “because it seemed like kind of an unused, I had not thought about it as a play-space.” Whereas for Kathy, even as the walk reassured and strengthened her relationship with her child (he took her to the same place she had imagined), she was also introduced to territories that were important to other children. In the walk, she observed that her spatial map was limited to play-yards that were used by her child and other spaces were invisible to her. She noticed multifarious territories rather than marking the boundaries present only to her worldview.

Through the walk, habitats of other children bloomed as she saw “other children in actions.” Kathy observed a similar process in her son too. During the embedded walk, her son communicated that he found the early play yard “boring” as he was older and did not belong in the territory of younger kids—his mother paraphrased, “I was beyond this.” However, amidst the

walk, he witnessed the play of younger children playing; soon, he left his inhibition and joined them in their play. She described, “after five minutes, it was not that he was pretending to enjoy it. He was really having fun.” hooks (1989) states, “The appropriation and use of space are political acts” (p. 15). For the child, the place belonged to the younger kids (“foreigner”); it was territory of the other, where I do not belong. He has transcended that stage; he is older and competent and his play does not belong with them. However, in the walk, these boundaries of exclusion of identity are abandoned and he relives inclusive play with the inhabiting other. Such an encounter re-inscribes the prescriptive hierarchization of space where two children who were bounded by the construct of age could meet. Hence, the embedded walk resisted the formation of a singular homogenous space of representation, that which existed only for them and their child. This uniform voice of space makes territorial boundaries clear and concrete, but the walk re-inscribed diverse and intermingling territories—especially those of the other inhabitants. The embedded walk then introduced them to ethics of care. Now worlds that were valuable to the other children became not only present but also honored. The spaces now did not exist in independent isolation but co-existed inter-dependently with other spaces. Besides (re) producing distinctive forms of embedded practices (and bodies), walking also (re)produces and (re)interprets space and place “continued movement, continued process, continued expansion” (Edensor, 2000, p. 82).

In watching their children and other children play, the spaces of the playground transformed into places. After the embedded walk, Macy noticed a new sense of honor for difference and presence of the “other” in herself. She noted that now, when she drops off her child, she is attentive to the other children’s play, a view that was not available to her before:

But it's not a place where I ever saw the kid playing, really. I never thought much about it as part of the school. So now, it opened a little bit of my vision [...] Oh it is a play yard. [...] Although I never see my kid here, although he's never here [...] They were having a lot of fun so I was able to see other kids in action in that play yard. I usually just kind of drive past it [...] Because I'm on my way out. So it was a way of kind of like so that's what kids do in this yard.

For Allison, the places that her daughter revealed became special places for her. In a related vein, Annie revealed that seeing her children develop deep connections with these places altered her relationality with places that she found aversive. She reflected that during the walk that she was hoping that one of her children would identify the Gingko tree in the play yard as a disliked place, because the smells of its berries disgusted her. However, in witnessing her children's excitement and declaration "This is the best tree. I hope it never gets removed," she described finding a new respect for her children's voice, saying, "it made me like that tree a little bit more." Previously for her, the tree and its smell disrupted her engagement with the spaces, forcing her to move out the space. Nevertheless, the walk brought the inexhaustible sensory richness of the tree in the life of her children who were enchanted by the tree that offered them the possibility to climb and create things. Unlike her, her children could withstand the smell of the tree and the wildness of nature as they could perceptually and bodily engage with the tree (or nature) in ways that were silent in her adult world.⁴⁰ The adult's decorative standard of niceness or an objectifying gaze can then rob the vitality, power, and presence that places have in the lives of their children.

⁴⁰ I have already unpacked the significance of this wilderness in the children's world in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

Annie pondered that even though she still disliked the tree, she was mindful that this tree is beautiful to someone, to her children, and thus she engaged with the tree in more pathic ways. Thus, the embedded walk gave her scope to move from her self-centric stand to not only an eco-centric stand, but also an experience to receive opinions and places that were in contradiction and sometimes in opposition to her own well-being. It is this capacity to attend and humbly accept contradiction without the erasure of the other that I consider was the gift of the walk. In taking the walk the mothers and the children witnessed the heterogeneous lives that existed in the school spaces. The presence of “new spaces” was a political step that revised the rhetoric of space and resisted the formation of a center—a unified homogenous space. In these Waldorf play spaces then, through the embedded walk, the invisible territories presumably got re-territorialized, singular spaces became present, invisible spaces inhabited. Such a multifarious discourse of space is a counter challenge to centralization, which is a critical step in hegemony. The walk honored the dissimilar spaces. Through this walk, the parents and children found an explicit space to put contradictory places, transitional spaces, dominant spaces, and bordering spaces together.

Theme: Distinctive Forms of Resistance

“This is not interesting to me.” When research takes up issues of voice and empowerment at the center of its political engagement, the wisdom of “dissent” becomes critically important in order to address issues of responsibility and power. Research upholds the ethical principle of dissent through IRB’s and consent forms, e.g., “the right to withdraw from the study at any given time.” In working with children, the right to consent and dissent become convoluted since ethical guidelines for children’s participation rest in the hands of adults (parents and guardians). In the Child-Map study, consent was complicated since parents were the

researcher. Being mindful of the power dynamics in research and to aid pedagogical understanding of consent, child-centered researchers such as Dockett, Einarsdóttir, and Perry (2012) have designed child-friendly consent forms to bridge these hierarchical gaps. However, “signing a consent” is not a mere signature on a page, inscribed with technologies of words that can address the myriad complexity and messiness of hearing a “yes” and/or a “no.” While previous sections have focused on the structure of saying yes (sharing), what does it mean to hear a “no” that disturbs, stirs, perturbs, and troubles the silent (and often abysmal) waters of everyday life? Sharing or participation, the essence on which research and empowerment lies, can also be tools of tyranny. With an official diary and pen, the colonizer entered the world of the natives with a seeming curiosity to know (Smith, 1999). Signing a consent form does not necessarily grant access to the researcher to enter the world of the “other.” Even when a participant signs the consent form, she can silently maintain the agency of the dissent. The child can resist the researcher through being silent and thus expressing dissent.

Macy noticed her child’s apparent disinterest and frustration as she walked the playground with ensemble voice (narrative drawing) and pen. Macy ardently took notes and reiterated instructions—show me a place you like, show me a place you dislike, mark the pin on the map. In her child’s disinterest, Macy heard “I don’t care” and “this is not interesting to me.” Allison noticed a similar reaction while taking a walk with her seven-year-old. As Allison entered the playground with excitement to know everything about her child’s world, she experienced the dance of negotiation and compromise that her child exercised to maintain her right to secrecy. She reflected:

She seemed more hesitant than I thought. I thought that she’d be very excited to take me around and say oh this is where I do this, and this is where I do that but she wasn’t.

[...] She would talk about it a very little bit, but she would not get into details. [...]. I wanted to know everything. She didn't want to tell me anything, so she just gave me a little bit.

She observed the hesitancy in her child, the lack of interest in sharing, and desire to protect details of her play. Foloque (2010) noted that not all the children want to talk about their secret places. In his study, a child firmly asserted his/her right to dissent, stating, "I don't need to tell you anything else" (p. 242). This dance of negotiation is significant for young children whose privacy may not be given the same due as that of older children or adults.

In the realm of the school, an empowering study can at times take the form of classroom tasks⁴¹, "of compulsion, requirement, or the teacher's request that children participate" (David, Edwards, & Alldred, 2001, p. 351). Similarly, even outside school, children might often be persuaded and required to participate in various activities by their parent(s) or other adults. In such circumstances, the critical encounter of "dissent" does bring issues of empowerment and hegemony to the forefront. Empowerment as "techniques" or "adult devised tools" or tools that only understand empowerment in the form of participation cannot guarantee children's real engagement in research. In hearing the children's agentic "no," "disinterest," "not sharing," the parents honor diverse ways in which children exercised their power and right to say no, or what hooks (1989) calls "space of refusal—where one can say no to the colonizer" (p. 24). These are "hidden transcripts" of resistance or non-obvious acts and moments of resistance in research (Scott, 1990). The child participated (being agentic) but in ways that were not adhering to adult oriented definition of participation. Macy described this process as negotiation. She articulated,

⁴¹ For our IRB, we also introduced the study as part of class activity.

“Without talking about it, she negotiated a compromise. She did not want to tell me. I wanted to know everything. She didn’t want to tell me anything, so she just gave me a little bit.” Macy’s child fed her some details to put her mom’s curiosity to rest but maintained the ownership of her world by keeping the secret alive. By deferring the construct of sharing, the child retained agency to weave alternative and creative ways to re-define empowerment and to negotiate what aspects she wanted to share with her mother.

However, hearing “no” was not a comfortable process for the mothers. The tyranny of hearing “no” called them to justify or normalize their children’s desire to dissent. Allison found a strong comfort in thinking that her child had a group of friends with whom she shared her world, “she is growing normal in that sense.” Macy attributed this disinterest to his age, whereas for Kathy it was his mood that day. Thus, there was seemingly a strong pressure to “normalize” the “no.” Clark and Moss (2001) remind us that it is not only a question of seeing the world from children’s perspectives but of acknowledging their rights to remain silent. This negotiation introduced Allison to the grief of hearing a “no.” She experienced a moment of vulnerability.⁴² In the moment of respecting her child’s boundary she simultaneously experienced care and grief. It is no surprise that care also indicates worry and attentiveness. With a soft voice and her eyes filled with tears, she realized that in her child’s “no” were also the first signs of movement from “always needing the mother to not needing her.” Grief touched her, as she felt conflicted about her loss and desired to find contentment. She said, “I think that it’s really good that I have a second child, or I’d be heartbroken.” However, in bearing grief she also experienced an

⁴² If we understand this moment of vulnerability in the world of the researcher, it also gives us insight into how these vulnerable moments might be addressed in the life of a researcher. Do we pathologize their experience or ask them to resolve these feeling and maintain an emotional neutrality or should we reveal these moments to preserve the humanity of the researcher?

empathetic intertwinement. Allison recollected her own childhood and the enigmatic world of unicorns that she kept as secret from adults. She described the conflict of real and unreal, a part of her remained enchanted by the reality of unicorns and a part aware that they were “imaginary.” She feared talking and sharing her stories with an adult “who would pick apart.” In an empathetic engagement, she noticed personal transformation as she discovered the wisdom in honoring her child’s choice to preserve her experience— “maybe sharing would make it less of her own.” In and through this grief, she moved from caring for to caring with another. Her position altered from “I was really hoping she would share” to “maybe it was a good thing she did not.”

In the research field, it is sometimes with great curiosity and power that a researcher enters the field. Yet, there is some humility in honoring the “no” and letting the secret of the participants survive rather than voyeuristically expose their worlds. Some children regard participation as intrusive and actively choose not to participate (Kirby & Bryson, 2002). This can be particularly the case when research occurs within private time or space; it is merely a politics of inclusion within the hegemonic order (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

“Did not have a good response.” Although as researcher we make efforts to value children’s voices, we can also simultaneously maintain a series of interlocking discourses, which problematize and marginalize children. It is then fundamentally important to understand child-adult relations and practices that are central in deciding which children’s voices get heard, what they can legitimately speak about (Mannion, 2007), which voices are considered worthy of listening to, and what gets misheard as incoherent noise.

In the mothers’ interviews, verbal fluency and age were strongly related with competence. Macy articulated the difficulty she encountered in interacting with her three-year-

old; she said, “I gave him prompts, re-directed him but he did not have a good response.” Being sensitive, she attributed the reason for not receiving a “good response” to his age— “three-year-olds are not so verbal” or “I have a three-year-old and that was the biggest challenge.” She spoke with a certain wistfulness towards older children, whose verbal fluency she imagined would grant them the privilege of speaking confidently about their places and play— “oh yea, mom I can do this and this.” Allison and Liz also attributed their children’s hesitancy to share to “age.” Verbose responses were often spoken about as good responses. A study by Gallagher and Gallagher (2008) notes that teachers often picked verbally articulate students for research, excluding soft spoken and quiet peers. However, spoken words and verbal articulation are only one mode of communicating and sharing one’s world, whereas having a voice (or voicing) captures diverse and complex elements: utterance of the spoken word (and beyond the spoken word), utterances of the body, utterances in children’s drawing, utterances in silences, and utterances of the *marginalized*.

While “child-centered” participatory approaches aim to reduce inherent adult-child power imbalances, such dynamics can persist if children’s “voices” or “perspectives” are rendered inauthentic or meaningless because of implicit understandings and unacknowledged personal assumptions of what “voice” is (Spyrou, 2011; Thomson, 2007). This raises strong questions about participation, listening, and voice. As Piaget states, “it is not so much that children don’t know how to talk: they try out many languages until they find one their parents can understand” (cited in Rabinow, 1977, p. 167-168). The desire to have a “good response” underlines that even with the best of intentions and practices, adults can rephrase, reformulate, or hear only those voices that make sense to them. It also, in some way, speaks to an adult anxiety to “improve” children, and make them more productive.

The very notion of voice grounded in speech to which everyone would adhere, arrived at through discussion, is itself a democratic constructed ideology that hears the most dominant voice. This assumption of finding the voice and child-centeredness can be deeply rooted in the principle of a democratic subject or what Parker (1894) calls the embryonic democracy. The ideology is rooted in the belief that when granted freedom the subjects will act free or speak their minds: freedom of speech or promise of freedom through speech (a virtue of democracy) is a privileged stance. Democratic subjectivity assumes that the child is autonomous, and action based and when given the opportunity or tools will exercise freedom, choice, and speech. Cannella (1999) asserts that psychologists and educationists for years have asserted and discussed the possibility of creating a free and democratic environment in schools and other institutions through child-centric research. However, choice is not a matter of fact for the child as it cannot be achieved through prescribed methods unless social hierarchy and social relations are explored. Maglajilic (2010) identified that even in child participatory research, children are often skeptical of adults' intentions, often hesitating to collaborate or share because as they are aware that adults "do not take them seriously" or, as one of the child participant in his study quoted, "they think we are too childish to be involved in sorting out our problem" (p. 212).

hooks (1989) touches upon this historicity of silent voices residing at the margins, and who claim their authorship in their right to be silent. For her, when voices have been left out, censored, or declared as uncertain and illegitimate, articulation and coming to voice is a laborious process: "Ours is a broken voice" (p. 17). Although hooks' analysis is aimed at understanding the unarticulated suffering and pain that exists in the souls and narratives of those living at the margins, her wisdom helps us in comprehending that images of fluent voices are a privilege. The desire of the parents for their children to speak their minds in verbally fluent and

confident voices is a privilege for those who are accustomed to having their voices heard.

However, by choosing to remain silent, by saying no, or by speaking in ways that differed from the desire of their parents, children exercised their own agency and their own empowerment, and thus moved from the position of being silenced to *choosing to be silent*.

Furthermore, trust in the verbal is also a promise of “intelligibility.” In verbal language, there is an illusion of complete understanding. Gadamer (1975) states, “The essential relation between language and understanding is [...] that the preferred object of interpretation is a verbal one” (p. 391). When one speaks in words or in the same language, the deception of grasping and understanding is maintained. There is an assumption that the other uses the words in the same sense that one uses or comprehends. This faith in the unknowability of language is easier to maintain when two persons speak different languages, but not knowing is also a terrifying space. Thus, the mothers desire a voice (verbal language) that can give surety of their children’s experience. Such a surety was also desired by the mothers because if their children’s voices were not stated and heard clearly, they could lose their beloved places. However, the politics of voice need to dis-place to de-center the assumption that one’s own language is clear in its meaning.

Thus, there needs to be an understanding in which multiple positions intersect to create opportunities for resistance, support, solidarity, and, in some cases, withdrawal and disengagement. Such a refusal rejects dominant patterns of participation and the production of knowledge. It opens scope to accept that concepts and practices initially thought to be emancipatory can quickly become agents of oppression when they are institutionalized and embedded as universalized intervention strategies. Such a resistance keeps the multiplicity and conflict open, creating moments for transformative listening by generating alternative ways of understanding power, speech, and empowerment.

Summary: Going Back to Things Themselves

Different sections of this chapter have addressed diverse and overlapping themes of the shift in orientation that the embedded walk offered to the mothers' and children's worlds and brought forth the power structures that impacted their relationship. Additionally, I feel it is important to delineate explicitly the role of the adaptable instructions on the parent's packet which provided a framework and that brought a shift in their consciousness during the walk.

Indeed, the framework of the embedded walk directed attention—where to look and what to look at. With a request (instruction) to walk the familiar play spaces, the first evocation that the Child-Map study culminated for the parents (and children) was to walk with a sense of wonder: “While you and your child are out walking the grounds, wonder with him.” This call to wonder evoked a mode that was different from the routine meandering on the play spaces—fostering attention, requesting to be with things differently, a waiting for something new to come, and being receptive to receive: for the things to show themselves.

The wonder also encouraged fresh eyes; a freshness to view places, experiences, things, and their children. This freshness transformed “parental eyes,” making them aware of their parental identity and ways of looking that had censored them from receiving and engaging authentically with their children's experience. The fresh eyes of wonderment that the walk generated seemed to have nurtured their ability to surrender their parent eyes and their corresponding world-view to honor their children's way of being in the world. The process of self-reflection harbored by wonder helped them in seeing their children's play spaces, world, and identity. This wonderment to their world also cultivated a greater reverence for the things and subtleties of their lived experience. The sense of wonder also marked a stance of awe, humility, and a shift in self-consciousness from the mode of analysis, probing, and authority of knowledge

to “wonder together” with their children, cultivating genuine interest and receptivity to learn something new from their children. The call to wonder during the embedded walk was re-learning to see, refraining our perceptual and limited ways of being and call to a pre-reflective mode of being the world. In the parents’ accounts, we heard that openness to be reverential, present, and receptive to the world around them.

The adaptable instructions on the parent’s packet marked the trails on what to notice and how to follow the footprints of the children’s world, what Liz called a “good framework.” The attention was centered and focused, as instructions of the frame required them to attend to places that their child likes and dislikes. This call to attend to places and spaces brought the whole playground into the purview of their responsiveness to a space they had to reacquaint and rediscover, the call to specific (especially liked places) places that accorded places “a special status.” The careful process of walking around the play spaces and choosing fewer places, while distressing to some children, reminded the adults that these are not just places of play, but places which gathered and sustained the world of their child. The mothers, in witnessing these fewer places, found a greater appreciation and attention for the place, the activity, and their emotional significance for the children.

The embedded walk encouraged parents to walk through these liked and disliked places, allowing for extra-ordinary qualities and richness of places, things, experiences parents thought were ordinary. In noticing both their reactions and their children’s reactions to the things, places, and experiences that their child shared, they were able to be with their unique felt states, thereby increasing the significance of these experiences for the parents. It was not now just a tree, just a sandbox or monkey bars, but they were introduced to the world that nurtured their child. In witnessing the happiness, the pride, and the joy, in being at these special places the parents

realized their responsibility to take good care of these spaces and thus found a new connection with these places. Moreover, in realizing the significance of places and experiences in their child's world, they were also able to develop new connections and hospitality to play spaces that might inhabit other children's worlds. Through the embedded walk, their relationship with other invisible spaces on the grounds transformed as they found themselves noticing and realizing that different play spaces inhabited other children's worlds.

The call for attention also fostered a thoughtful gaze, as it seems that the mothers were able to censor, control, and reduce their mental and emotional engagements. The demand for attention was intertwined with the request for a distinct time where attention was not divided between tasks, activities, and bodily desires. By taking a step back from their habitual temporal rituals the parents were able to live time more consciously and more fully. With ample amount of time, space, and energy, they found themselves regarding things and places around them more carefully, more intensely, and through new eyes. Yet, the ample amount of time also necessitated that instructions on the child-map direct how to "spend" this time. Otherwise, the attention of the parents might have dispersed, as having the luxury of time without a structure and purpose can be threatening to our capitalistic mode of engaging with time, where time and attention to the moment and event is defined by a task at hand. Without a definite step on how to spend their time, parents might easily have been confused or lost on how to effectively focus their attention on their children's world.

Thus, the instruction on the child-map provided practical guidelines as to what to focus on: "Observe how your child is interacting with the place," "Does he or she do this alone or with friends?" or "What does he/ she do?" laid out ways to focus their attention and time on one place, one experience, one activity at a time. This centered attention fostered the process of

concentrating on one place and their proclivities towards that place, so that they could come into greater awareness of their children's world and the nuanced ways in which their children were engaging with the place. As Annie asserted, "It is nice to get a chance to give her sort of a framework to talk to me about how she experiences the school. It is not something we do as a matter of course or habit. We don't ask for those questions." The parents were encouraged to observe, rather than interrupt, play and follow their child. These questions also provided a descriptive lens to the experience rather than understanding the causality of an experience. It brought the emphasis to concrete experiences, to how the experience was unfolding or how the child was living the experience, encouraging parents to stay close to the phenomena and the way their children were experiencing the phenomena in the immediacy of the moment. Such a disclosure, attention, and receptivity to phenomena does need the luxury of time.

The shift to a child-centric mode was also possible because the parents were required "to ask your child to tell you about the place." This command to "ask" already granted that the embedded walk required a different dynamic than the usual adult centric mode of explaining, ordering, and languaging their children's world. Thus, "asking" rather than assuming and explaining was the first right of privilege that the instruction of the walk provided, bringing the child into conversation and dialogue. The parents were encouraged to follow and wait to see what happens in an organic flow rather than directly control the outcome. The "asking" and following went a long way in building a thoughtful self, as parents were able to discern their own parental needs from their children's desire. With this new way of engaged seeing and asking, they moved from being a parent or surveilling observer to an agentic participant in their children's world. This participation was observed as new, as if they were witnessing their children's play and world for the first time. They felt an embedded and empathetic relationality

with their child. It also gave experiences a proper hearing, as in seeing their children's world, they were also able to hear the significance of those experiences. Each of the mothers in the study, in one way or another, noted a sense of becoming more centered and accommodating to their children's places, activities, needs, and desires, such as the desire for privacy, needing more time to play, or valuing places and things that they disliked such as the tree.

Furthermore, it is also true that the parents were always curious about their children's world, demonstrated by how they would ask them questions after school hours. However, they were not receiving descriptive answers from their children. It seems that previously their conversations tended to rely on intellectual, conceptual, and rational ways of knowing which required their children to narrate and recall a decontextualized experience. However, the embedded walk differed from this everyday intellectualization, as the children were not required to explain play, but rather to walk around in the play spaces. By encouraging the parents to walk through the play spaces, the lived contexts of conversations, places, and things were brought into the immediate moment. This made dialogue with children not a test of memory, but re-acquainted parents to the sensory ways in which children lived their experiences.

Thus, the essence of the embedded walk and its instructions were not merely in asking, but in creating a potential for a different mode of asking. Instead of intellectual questions, parents were encouraged to be in spaces and ask about experiences, examples, and stories in the context of the play spaces. Abram (1997) says, "to oral awareness, to explain is not to present a set of finished reasons, but to tell a story" (p. 265). For children (and for adults) the lived experience is embedded in stories and anecdotes of daily life. Stories capture the complexity of human connections, communicating and inviting others into our emotional life through subtle symbolism and subtexts. By sharing stories, the children invited the parents into a realm beyond

the adult intellectual self that wanted to “make sense of experience” to simply living the experience.

Through the vivid detailing of their daily lives, the stories of the trees, the friends, the sand, the surroundings, and the play were animated. Children’s stories encapsulated memories, gestures, and sounds enfolding the wide imaginative but real world for the child. Play and things were not concrete objects but were celebrated and lived. Stories, Abram (1999) says, “carry magic, a power to influence not only persons but the living land itself” (p. 151). The stories have the power to stay, but adults have largely forgotten this mode of story-telling. By telling a story in detail, the children can bring the land and the play alive, as if they were creating the narrative through telling, rather than speaking it as an afterthought during after school hours. Through the stories, the children engaged the parents into a sensual encounter through the body, it was now not a matter of rationally making sense, but it made sense because it was enlivened by the senses.

Furthermore, the greatest significance of the instructions on the embedded walk were its capacity to accommodate acts of freedom. The parents and children were asked to record their experience, but through a mode of recording that could sustain creative freedom: writing, drawing, or listening to stories. While in a hegemonic world, the right to write is in the hands of the oppressor, the embedded walk passed the pen, the crayon, the pencil into the hands of the child. The children had the right to share the stories, narratives, and discourses that often are marginalized in the adult system, but were also given the authority to choose the mode that felt closest to articulate their voice.

Each frame, each walk compelled a “reconstruction” or “co-creation” in response to the singularity of the relationship between the parent and the child. Thus, this framework of the walk was not a rigid frame but what Ferenczi (1928) calls the “elastic frame.” He explains “Like an

elastic band, it must yield to the patient's pull, but without ceasing to pull in his own direction" (p. 89). Kathy reverberated this elasticity that the instructions for the embedded walk offered her: "It gave me a good framework but I adopted it based on my relationship. I knew how to alter questions so that he can understand it." Macy also noticed how she had to alter the instructions and questions to hear and guide her child when the fixed question in the packet failed to evoke a response: "I realized maybe he wasn't understanding that. So, I said, I had to change and modify it a little bit and say prompt him at certain places." The mothers realized that the standard set of instructions did not fit all and through their prompts and meanders, they brought in spontaneity and creative choices based on the unique intersubjective dynamic between themselves and their children. They found ways to live in the immediacy of the experience, and to free up what could have become a rigid set of rules.

The paramount feature was the frame's capacity to sustain silences and the right of the child to say "no." Despite our best intention to foster empowerment through speech, some of the children in the research decided not share their world with their parents (researcher) by not answering their parents' questions. This was a significant scope of the frame of the research, as it could sustain the possibility to hear a "no." This "no" echoed a reminder that empowerment is not a step-by-step process that can be achieved by employing techniques, but rested in the power of a research to accommodate and honor dissenting voices.

In its association with state, political parties, and democracy, the word "political" is often experienced as alienating and disempowering. The words "politics," "transformation," and "empowerment" are themselves spatial metaphors that often communicate hierarchy and distance in a top down fashion. In such a conception, political change is often equated with dramatic and extraordinary revolution that is the entitlement of the few and for the service of the few, often

disenfranchising subjects. However, different sections of this chapter have explicitly and implicitly unpacked the “everyday” as the site of not only political control, but that re-walking the everyday can nurture spaces of political empowerment and transformation in the *everyday* of the everyday. This re-entry (walk) into the “everyday” life of children brought political activism from distant and dramatic public action to the ordinary as site of activism. Such a re-visitation bloomed extra-ordinary in the ordinary.

Chapter Five: Marking My Own Spaces: Communal Child-Map Project

After walking and re-walking through the terrains of the playground, children marked their imprints on the Child-Map created by the eighth graders. To recapitulate, as part of the Child-Map research design, eighth grade participants had created a cartographic map of their school spaces as part of their class activity. This map was then mounted and placed in the front hall of the Waldorf school. After the end of the embedded walk, guided by their children, the parents and their children were invited to mark their favorite and least favorite places on the school grounds with uniquely color-coded pins (green for “liked” and red for “disliked”). Inviting parents and children to mark their significant places through the act of placing pins on the map was intended to create a political shift through which children can designate and voice entitlement to their own territories. Continuing with the exploration of my dissertation to delve into the transformative process embedded in research, this chapter unpacks *the act of marking the pins* on the map for the political dynamics attendant thereon. I reflect on the political journey, and the transformation embedded in the act itself (pinning the map) by reflecting on and analyzing interviews with five mothers. To place the pin is to assert, mark, and commit to a political and *identitary* position, and it behooves us to examine this process for the authority and politics the act implies and intends, taking into clear consideration that those dynamics may operate differently among the groups of parents and children. With this ethos, I now put forward the themes to account the transformative impact of Communal Child-Map Project.

“I am talking about the pin not the kids”

The Child-Map study invited parents from kindergarten to fourth grade to take an embedded walk (guided by their children) to the play places their children inhabited. This embedded walk elicited multiple intimate experiences which emerged between the parents and

the children, and the physical pin became a symbolic instrument to embed their voices on the map. With labels like “special pin” “my pin” “our pin,” the pin was an artifact of their polymorphous voices and experiences. The pin was not only an object, or a symbolic marker like a vote, but a “thing” in its German etymology “gathering or a coming together” (Simms, 2008, p.82). The pin *gathered* a spatial-temporal world for the parent and the child. For Allison, the pin carried the resonance of, and provided closure to, the emotional evocation of the walk she took with her child. For Macy, it symbolized the fear and excitement about which places would stay, and aspiration for new places that will emerge on the ground after renovation. She stated “I put my pins in [...] but there were several of the red ones, the ones that did not like the sandbox [...] I was like oh, and I just remember thinking, I wonder if that means they will get rid of it, but [...] I’m very curious to see what becomes of this.” For Liz, it was a marker that voiced the spaces her child liked. The marking of the pin seemed to be a visible translation of the polymorphous expressed-unexpressed experiences that had emerged for the parents and their children during the walk.⁴³ The mothers’ accounts of the pins help one hear that the pin itself, as an artifact, was significant inasmuch as it blurred the boundary between the subject and object. The presence of such blurring was most visible in Kathy’s narrative who interchangeably used the words “pin,” “kid” and “my kid.” Thus, the pin was not merely an external tool or object, but seemingly became part of the body or oneself, what Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) would call “bodily auxiliary” (p.152) — it ceased to exist only as an object and instead became an extension of their bodies. The pin called their bodies and perceptual capabilities in new ways. With the piercing of the pin, Kathy experienced herself and her child as being invited in, included in, and residing in

⁴³ For older children the pin became a strong tool for resistance; this resistance and its meaning with respect to our project will be explored in the last chapter of this dissertation.

the research process, rather than being a distant observer. She articulated this with a childlike enthusiasm:

There's a project there, and you usually just look, like when you go to a museum. Look but then don't touch. And here you're actually piercing the thing, but you're allowed to do it. [...] It was pleasurable, almost to a physical level. The pin was super concrete, and I really enjoyed it. And it looked gorgeous [...] Because you're part of it. And it was to in some ways like you know the whole process was not distant.

The pin does not evoke a mere action but calls for a pathic action: "embracing the general mood, sensibility and felt sense of being the world or mood of the lived body" (Van Manen, 1999, p. 30). Kathy also encountered the difference that varied sensory experiences evoked for her; she remarked that she was not merely a spectator who watched or witnessed the research process, but by piercing the pin, she touched the pin and was touched by it. Van Manen (1999) helps us see the fundamental connectedness that is experienced through touching in his statement "touch is the primordial medium by which to overcome separation and relational distance" (p. 30). Thus, I reiterate the pin became an important artifact of the Child-Map study as in its affordance to touch, it erased the body and the object boundary embedding the child and the parent in the project.

Touching provided a more intimate embodiment than seeing, which often separates the subject, making the object "an other," which can be fixed with the totalizing eye. In contrast to touch, the hallmark of the Western intellectual tradition has been to put great value on vision and visual metaphors: vision is that which analyses, dissects, or objectifies the subject and object of the study, construing it as "the data". Whereas, by touching the pins, Kathy found a fluidity and

perceptual reciprocity between the subject and the object; she was touching and being touched.

In Kathy's testimony, one hears reminiscences of Merleau-Ponty's (1968), who calls this intimate process "reversibility" and likens it to the right hand touching the left hand while simultaneously being touched by the left. Piercing the pin then became an embodied act, assuring Kathy "that the kid is in the map and that I know who the kid is, my kid." The pin fitting the contours of the parents' and children's body simultaneously provided them with a sense of being grasped (being understood) and grasping (understanding). Thus, the pin was not merely a decorative object, but gathered, anchored, and sustained the memory of the research, as well as the parent and child relationship.

The affordance of the pin to penetrate with its tendered pointedness and sharpness, assured that a trace will remain on the Child-Map. Even if the pin is removed, the pin will permanently have punctured the map, leaving holes, voids, or wounds that will continue to haunt the map: marking its presence, not only on the map, but also in the emotional discourse of the school. The affordance of the pin to penetrate and survive in the Child-Map perhaps was necessary as the act of pinning was embedded in the grand narrative of the renovation of the play space that the Waldorf School had decided to undertake. The pin evidently then gave a proper hearing by gathering and anchoring the inexhaustible depth of the children's experience, assuring that their emotionality to places and experiences can now be pinned even when the playground might change.

However, children also felt the paradox of living and enjoying multiple spaces on the playground and yet being assigned a singular pin to mark only one place on the map. They expressed their disappointment in simple words: "But I like all of these things. Which one should I choose?" This was evident in Annie's description of the emotional turmoil that her three

children faced when asked to symbolize their experience of places with a singular pin. She narrated

for them, the actual having a special pin with these special colors was huge [...] they wanted to mark lots of places, [...] I know that they really connected their voice to the physical pin. So, it was like well I know I wrote those other things but I put my pin there, so that's my big thing.

The act of limiting children's spaces to a single pin (much like a vote) perhaps has some resonance of an adult hierarchical system, which might have been antithetical to the children's experience of the place as children had lived these places. Annie's rational compromise with her children that they could write as many places as they wanted to on the blank sheet (ensemble voice) provided by the PlaceLab, did not resolve her children's discomfort, for whom writing (maybe another adult mode) did not capture the lived experience of the special embodied pin, which was closer to their voice.

Their play spaces were lived experiences, which could not be presented or represented in a singular pin. The special pin, like the vote, with its essence of being visible to the school and adult authorities, assured that the child's voice might not be lost. In contrast, the ensemble voice, with its adherence to written words or drawing, could be accumulated into a written report or an archive where the child's voice could be lost in the numerous pages of the school history (memory). The child could not have afforded such a forgetting of their place and their voice as the act of pinning was instigated under the backdrop of the renovation of school grounds. The fear of losing their places and the choice to only save one place was ironic as it meant the erasure of other significant memories, experiences, selves, and places. While the adults possibly learned

to compromise their *identitary* position to one spot, one identity, the children resisted and challenged this totalization of their life-worlds to one fixed point (one pin) and communicated their desire for multiple pins.

“I’m still able to recognize that there’s that voice that I know, whose voice that is”

The blurring of the subject-object boundary between the pins and the self allowed the parents (mothers) and children to cherish and recognize their singular voices. They were now part of the political transformation of the playground. The marking of the pins gave Kathy an assurance that the singularity of her child’s voice would continue to stay in the map, despite the addition of multiple pins making it “redder” and “bigger.” The mothers experienced that their children helped to constitute the larger process: their children’s voices stayed, gave meaning, and composed the gestalt of the map. Kathy articulated this experience as

It has a little part that I can identify that is his perspective and his experience and his view. And it adds to it. Yeah. It’s there. It hasn’t gone anywhere despite the fact that it has grown and it has more pins in it and some parts are blobbyer and redder or pinker [...] I’m still able to recognize that there’s that voice that I know, whose voice that is. And it’s my kid and that’s pretty neat.

This singularity of the voice is a rare, yet, an important shift in understanding the discourse of counter-power and transformation, especially when our movements of emancipation are organized around counting and considering only those choices (votes) that lead to the formation of the majority (hegemony). The Child-Map, with its “special pins,” did not merely reduce the children’s voices to an anonymous number, concept, or category but rather, preserved the

singular subjectivity that cannot be totalized or replicated, and that is “alterior” to any other (Levinas, 1961/1979).

The Child-Map and the pins re-builds the political understanding of the child, where the child’s unique subjectivity and alterity can be received without being erased. The individual pins were not reduced into numerical frequency, their places were not clubbed into categories, or their voices “averaged” into a representation of a grade or a unitary child. Their voices also did not get lost in the sea of numerous voices, or in the hegemony and assimilation of the melting point. The map sustained their voices, their pin, their place without reducing their pin to all the other pins, or letting the pin be lost in insignificance in the data collection.

Moreover, the visibility and preservation of the singular voice is also significant because in our adherence to protect the child, child-centric researchers value the concept of anonymity (de-identifying the name) and thereby erasing the identity of the child. However, in the parents’ account, we hear that the pin is cherished for its capacity to sustain the recognition of the child’s unique voice, even when pins adhere to the norm of keeping the child’s anonymity. The child’s trace, signature, and the mark on the study can be preserved and sustained, despite the map being populated by diverse pins making the map bigger.

“The blobs or the loners co-exist in the map”

The singularity of their pins did not simply produce individualistic isolating opinions. The parents and children found meaning and value in recognizing their pin *in relation to the other pins*. Annie described that every morning, her young children performed the enthusiastic ritual of looking at the map. They would admire their pins for a moment, and then re-discover and re-read the newness felt on the map by their exuberant comments: “Oh! Look now there are

a lot of likes here. Oh, all of the second graders love this, and oh, look, you can see the fifth graders.” The pin in itself then does something different in the politics of empowerment and change. Unlike voting or gathering information where the participating subject is mostly interested in their own agendas and their own self-interest, noting the presence of other pins on the map shifted the children’s and parents’ subjectivity from the position of being self-realizing subjects who pursue their own interests to being ones who engage with others’ places, with not only wonder, awe, and curiosity, but also a desire to honor, respect, and save others’ places.

Both children and parents (mothers) were particularly fascinated by identifying spaces where disliked and liked pins (places) co-existed, or what Kathy called “blobs or loners co-existing together without negating each other.” In such recognition, the children and the mothers found themselves spotting spaces that they had not acknowledged before, making the space and the map visible and more alive for them. They were able to recognize the presence of nooks and corners that were not previously present in their rhetoric of the playground. Those places which especially caught the attention of the participants were the sparsely populated areas, or spaces that were marked by a singular pin. Noticing the single pin, Kathy said: “it’s fun to see [...] there’s someone saying something there.” Such a care to a singular voice is different from the usual political assumptions which guide how we understand empowerment (such as democracy), in which the most dominant voice is heard. However, now the parents and children were able to pay attention to a single voice, which spoke its own political implications. This revisiting and revising of the map became critical in dismantling and resisting the monolithic truth in the discourse of the school playground. Discussing the modification and flexible potentials of the map, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) comment:

The map is open and connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, re-worked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on the wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. (p. 12)

This brings up a new image of the map which is not a standardized, fixed representation of homogenous space, but which is dynamic, transitional, always in a state of becoming, and which inhabits myriad possibilities. This recognition of the plasticity of the map is what Deleuze and Guattari (1983) call the “rhizomatic” structure, that which breaks hierarchical and linear nature of the map (space and identity) and evokes an encounter that moves in all directions, without beginning, an end, center or margin. The Child-Map with its pins produced a space for a counter-power narrative by accepting multifarious territorializations, rather than marking the boundaries of space in unitary form. The pins re-worked the cartographic map by placing conflicting spaces, intermingled spaces, dominant spaces, and marginal spaces next to each other. It is then on this Child-Map that the boundaries between the center and the margins could not only co-exist but were blurred. This dismantling of hegemonic discourse, or allowing the production of counter-power narratives is critical because the creation of dominant and homogeneous space, identity, and culture has been an important instrument of control for the hegemonic (colonizer) power (Huggan, 1989).

The Child-Map, with its multiple diverse inscriptions, resisted the formation of a singular dominant voice and structure of space. This defies the very uniformity that characterizes the hegemonic discourse, which often marks territorial boundaries clearly and concretely. Theorists such as Homi Bhabha (1984) and Edward Said (1979) have argued that historically the map and

the representation of the natives' territories by the colonizer created a representation of the colonized that was in accordance with the hegemonic discourse. The colonizers kept the difference alive by producing representations of the colonized that was either caricatures of the Westernized singular self or caricatures of the indigenous self. However, with every new pin, the children of the Waldorf School revisited the playground, and formed what Huggan (1989) identifies as reterritorializing the multiform nature of space. Such geographical dispersal challenged the formation of a centralized play space (and identity) and was a counter-discursive practice to the Child- Map being a cartographic tool that produces mimetic representation or stable and fixed positions.

The pins in the Child-Map study fractured the production of a singular representation of childhood by producing narratives around dissimilarity. This resistance to fixed or unitary spaces challenged the impulse to fix the children's *identitary* positions or developmentally segregate children into a narrative of sameness, such as all eighth graders liked this place, fifth graders liked this space, or preschoolers disliked this place. Through the mapping with the pins, the children fractured or disrupted the adults' conception of childhood and resisted creating representations of childhood in the image of adulthood (emerging adults).⁴⁴ The children and parents were able to recognize spaces that were thought to be unclaimed, and the map became the medium for the imaginative re-visioning of space, allowing them to ask how the playground is right now and how it will transform in the future.

⁴⁴ Much like the colonizer who forms a devalued representation of the colonized or representation that mirrors the colonizer, the pins prevented adults from forming an image of children simply as miniature adults who will soon be civilized into adulthood.

The pins and the acknowledgment of the contested places also led to the birth of an understanding of the children's community as based in difference. In Western traditions, community and coming together is understood in the harmonization of people sharing the same values, beliefs, identities, which understandably gives the community a structure of sameness and guards us against difference (Zhao, 2016). However, through the dispersed pins in the Child-Map, a different language of childhood and school community was formulated: "as a signifying encounter with difference" (Todd, 2004, p.337). Such an understanding and openness to community based on difference challenged a reduction of the pins into the model of inclusion and assimilation: the pin does not melt like the melting pot or a mosaic that can be integrated, analyzed, and comprehended into a dominant landscape or discourse. The uniqueness of the Child-Map was that it was cluttered and overwritten, and it contained plurality, diversity, and multiple representations of childhood.

With the multiple intermingling boundaries created by the pins, the Child-Map also dispersed the centralized location and hegemonic focus on the map. The map was able to retain both convergences and divergence that existed on the school ground without prioritization. In addition, the differences between children's spaces that inhabited, the play spaces were not simply reduced to territorial disputes or conflict in ideologies that had to be remediated through assimilation. The diverse voices could be contained in the terrain of the map and continued to resist a fixed childhood identity. Huggan (1989) reminds us that such revisiting makes the map open, rather than closed, and prompts us to focus on "re-construction instead of de-, and on map-making rather than map breaking" (p.126). Now, the Child-Map is not a simple containment of only space, but also of differences within and across the culture of childhood. With every new pin, the mothers and children transitioned from accepting space as closed, to space as permeable

and temporal, producing revised rhetorical spaces. The homogeneity was further interrupted when the mothers and children noticed the individual “lone” voices on the map. In thinking about counter-power or empowerment, it is the interruption done by such a singular voice (as opposed to the economic value of majority) which also resisted the totalizing childhood voice into an identical sample or a category. It called for a multiplicity rather than fusion and assimilation.

In a world of private ownership and conquest, the Child-Map with its “special pins” introduced the children and parents to different kinds of spatial boundaries and borderlands that formed what they called the “third voice”: a gestalt of the individual and multiple voice.

“I was trying to find my bearings on the map”

In providing space for children’s voices, one is always confronted with the dilemma of considering research practices that can facilitate all of the participants’ choice of expressions. While the cartographic map created by the eighth graders provided a common terrain for students and parents to express their voices, it was not easy for all of the children to translate their lived experiences of space onto a cartographic map. Allison noted the discrepancy in her seven-year-old daughter’s response. Allison’s daughter pierced her pin on the map at a different location than the one she showed her mother during the walk. Allison wondered if the “house” (the one she marked on the map) was a landmark for the dirt pile (the one she showed during the walk). Liben, Kasten, and Stevenson (2002) noted that children and adults tend to use topological concepts to identify analogous locations in lived space and on the map. For example, when standing near a picnic table, I would locate my position on the map by searching for the symbolic representation of the table. For the child, however, the lived experience of the space could not be identified on the topological landscape of the map and called for a different sensorium and

conceptual way of looking at the world which was not natural to the child. For Allison's daughter, locating her favorite place on the map required a depersonalized and detached way of looking and conceptualizing the space. Thus, the child's struggle to perceive and comprehend the map is not simply an indication of intellectual immaturity, or lack of ability, but rather a reflection that the child is immersed in the world and not simply a casual observer.

The child's lack of participation, or characterization misunderstanding thereof as a cognitive failure, can be understood as a product of classical intellectualism, where mind is considered to internalize and represent a particular abstract schema and schematic of, and for, the world. However, for the child, symbols, space, or representation arise not from cognitive structures or mental maps, but through an active embodied relation with the world. For the child, there is a distinction and separation between the internal or external, experience and representation, subjective and objective, sensation and perception, and world and representation. Instead, the world/experience is primary and a wholly dominant mode of and in the world. Children have not yet learned the adult convention of dividing the external world into parts that exclude the experiencing state or equate spatial experience to objective representation. The child has a deeply erotic, participatory, and intertwined relation to things and the world that cannot be forgotten, distanced, or subordinated by the incorporeal world. The map is a visual trade for the sensed body that has multiple ways of engaging and exploring the world-- the place can be seen with eyes, smelled with the nose, touched by the skin, or felt in relationality with and to the friend and nearby places – all in an experience of the place as a whole. For some children, the sensory call and the invitation of the place could not be projected on the map, which called for the visual and disembodied way of engaging with the lived space.

The disconnect between the lived space and representation of the space on the map was also distressing to some adults, suggesting that even adults have not been completely habituated to the cartographic landscape. Macy expressed this discomfort by saying:

“I was like, I was trying to get my bearings on the map a couple times. I was like, okay, I had to go through like, this is a grades play yard. Here’s the house. I hope I’m getting it right. And then, of course, you’re trying to put the pin in the place and like, I don’t know if they’re gonna know that this is the circle of rocks with the flowers in it. It’s basically near that, but I was like I don’t also get that. That’s why I think I wrote about it to just to make sure that it was clear.”

In Macy’s description we hear that she was concerned about the accuracy of the map and its precise representation of the physical space (play spaces). She feels the pressure to get it right, of placing the pin where it was supposed to go— checking and desiring to spot the space out there with the space in here on the map. For Macy, the dissonance of not marking her child’s favorite spot accurately could not be resolved by rationalizing it to the cartographic nature of the map (whose symbolic depiction can be different than lived experience). Marking her child’s spot with precision was embedded within the concern that if the school authority did not comprehend her place mark they might “get rid of that.” In order to avoid the confusion, she made sure to write clearly and coherently the description of the place on the sheet of paper provided by the PlaceLab. Thus, the map was not only a simple cartographic map that displayed the location, but also a social platform to preserve the children’s places. This incident also speaks to the larger dimension of advocacy and empowerment which often asks the questions: “what needs to change?” or “what needs to be different?” However, in Macy’s narrative one hears the anguish that unthoughtful change can bring to the community. One also hears that transformation,

empowerment, and practices of counter-power are not simply about bringing radical renovation, but also preserving what has been sustained in the community.

Summary: Retracing the map and Communal Child-Map Project

In this chapter, I explored some of the diverse and overlapping themes of the shift in orientation and scope of empowerment that the act of marking the pin on the Child -Map offered to the parent's and their children's world. As we come to the end of this chapter, I feel it is important to go back to the method and outline the role of the Child-Map and act of marking the pin that brought a shift in the political economy of the child-centric research. Of course, many of the ideas presented here overlap, but I intend to emphasize these insights with respect to the Child-Map and the act of marking the pin as a methodological process in child-centric research.

In reviewing the child-centric research, I have already explored how child-centric researchers (e.g. Clark & Moss, 2000; Jones, Fleuroit, & Wood, 2005; Young & Barrett, 2001) have employed personalized and individualized maps by encouraging children to photograph or draw a personal interpretation of their daily lives and spatial landscapes. In contrast to highly personalized maps, standardized cartographic maps and precise GPS locations have also been used, for example Loebach and Gilliland (2010) employed a combination of cartographic maps and GPS to study children's desire for safety and security. Reviewing child-centric research, it becomes obvious that both cartographic and individualized maps have been used as a tool or prompts to elicit "better data collection." Researchers have neither commented nor explored how map making and *marking* maps – by putting pins, photographs, or even children's own handwriting thereon - can be politically transformative, and well in a way that is not adult-defined. Child-centric researchers are themselves adults, and as such may be blind to the politics

and power attendant on the act, which is another example of how power structures the very act, independent, outside or alongside the content of power.

Researchers have also treated the maps made by children as individual and isolated units of analysis, which inhibits the dialogue between participants, that was itself political in our Child-Map study. Similar to the child-led tour, the map becomes a tool to an end. As argued before, while these methods have been creative ways to access and actively involve children as participants, researchers have not explicitly paid attention to the method. One of the different modes of research this chapter (and dissertation) adopts is the creation of spaces to converse about the process, and to use data to evoke the process or value process as data itself.

The first step in this transformation was the creation of the map. As described before, part of the research design invited the eighth-grade participants to create the map of the school spaces, which was mounted and placed in the hallway of the school. By providing children with a cartographic map produced by adults, we would have recreated the same power structure that we were trying to resist, as maps have traditionally been considered tools of power, not transformation. As discussed before, maps have not only been used to erase, modify, or otherwise transform territories to political and ideological ends, but have also written stories of identity and spatiality in the privilege and manner of its representation. The work of Harley (1988) was critical in bringing attention to the sociohistorical and political dimensions of the cartographic map. He argued against the map's scientific ontology and highlighted that the production of territorial landscape privileges the hegemonic discourse (the colonizer).

Contrary to colonial cartography and other child-centric research, in the Child-Map study, children were invited to draw a map of their affective landscape. This map making was not simply a recording of their space on a standardized grid, but an opportunity for children to

manipulate or create a different spatial reality. The children's way of seeing, living, and being in the space was inscribed. In taking proprietorship of this power, eighth graders did not restrict themselves to the black and white grid, often the characteristic of the cartographic map, but instead painted their terrains with their own color system. With some territories fenced boldly and carefully and others more fluid, they communicated which territories could be trespassed and others that were prohibited. They could now mark important spaces (monuments), carefully detail the grasses and the trees that could have been ignored or erased by the adult cartographers. Such attention to the details and landscape possibly could not have been done by an adult cartographer. With the freedom to choose the color schemes and outline the territories, the children were able to put their own skill, knowledge, affective space, and mark the diverse subjective position that inhabited the different spaces on the ground. The eighth graders did not just record reality, but also imposed on it. The space was lived, and the meaning that they attached to it and the way the landscape was embedded in their bodies could now find a space in the politics of the map.



Image of the Child-Map created by the eighth graders

Through the Child-Map, the inhabitants of the space were now producers of the map. Since the history of map making is embedded in ownership or acquisition of space, the Child-Map making re-authorized authorship and returned the space to its original inhabitants.⁴⁵ Now the play space could not only be altered or enlarged based on the significance the space had for the children: play spaces that are meaningful could be enlarged in size and those that are disliked and insignificant can be minimized,⁴⁶ while other spaces could be kept a secret from the adult community. The potential to not disclose, to keep their beloved spaces a secret or alive by not revealing reflects the empowering nature of the secret, since the child can also now protect the territories that are seemingly too threatening to be shared with an adult. These new inscriptions, even though cartographical, are also metaphorical of the transformation they desired and lived on the land. Given versions of the map that are biased towards its makers, the Child-Map provided a potential to manipulate reality as much as it afforded recording it. Possibility of a different articulation and a new order of map making was fostered through the Child-Map. Thus, the map is not only about presence, but also and significantly so about absence as well. What is left off the map, off representation, for a host of reasons – from the willful secret to the privileged dismissal and how absence is marked– are crucial to us as the child-centric researcher who need to be particularly sensitive to absence.

However, Hamer (1989) reminds us that “the very activities of measuring, ordering, regulating, and standardizing, the production of accuracy that is the prerequisite of scale

⁴⁵ Maps were used to legitimize the reality of conquest and empire. They helped create myths which would assist in the maintenance of the territorial status quo.

⁴⁶ As discussed in chapter 3, children’s drawings and representation capture the affective experience of things and places. The size of the object is in relation to the meaning of the object in one’s experience.

mapping, involve a rigorous shaping of the material world that is at odds with and alien to the forms in which the material world has its prior existence” (p.184). Maps, with their mathematical representations of spatial structures and premised on an ideology of rigor and order, assumes to know exactly what the world looks like by claiming exact representation of the real world. By asking the children to adhere to the rules of cartography, thereby imposing a hegemonic structure of space on the child, there is a question as to whether an actual Child-Map was created.

However, Dixon and Jones (2004) remind us that our desire to look for what the world is like, or to search for the real world, or the child’s world, is in itself a dual boundary. This does not mean that no truth or reality exists, “but only that no founding presence, no objective source, or privileged ground of meaning *ensures* a truth lurking behind representations (Dixon and Jones, 2004, p.251, italics in original). Thus, the debate is not whether the map is a true representation of the child’s experiential world or not, as no representation can make claims to truth or mirrored correspondence between representation and a real world.

To claim that the Child-Map and pin are empowering tools, is to critically engage with the conditions of its authorship, if not its author-ity. The Child-Map was produced as part of the class activity, thereby creating considerable limitations on what was appropriate to be recorded and displayed. The map was also not created by all children, as only eighth graders were invited to produce the map for the whole community. It is important to explore whether by asking only the eighth graders, we as adults selected a certain group by some privilege and measure we deemed important, for example perhaps that these eighth graders were “the eldest” (“closest” to us?) and “most mature” (also “most” like us?) members of the community and who could, by those measures and our selection, map out the space for the entire community. For all the creative and liberatory potential of the map and the research procedure, we still retained and

exercised directing and structuring power as to its structure and unfolding. How radical have our methods really been, therefore, and how respectful, valuing, or trusting of the child's voice have we *really* been? Furthermore, the rigorous practices and careful recording of material reality did not invite the child's body and the ways in which the terrain lived in their bodies. It did not carry the scope of enlarging spaces that were meaningful to the children or capture their local experience of the space. There was no free play in the structure of the grid; the children could not walk into their play spaces and create their own map because the map of the grid called for a structured play.

Moreover, the school had already made the decision to renovate the school grounds. The map and the pins therefore existed within this *fait accompli*, within the realization that territories that were too visible, too invisible, or too fractured would be re-structured and play spaces taken away. Simply transporting the business of cartography to the children does not alter the fact that adults and school administrators have had and will continue to decide and allocate play spaces for children. Thus, the conditions of the map had been created even before the creation of the map. Furthermore, the creation of the Child-Map did not liberate the map from the conditions of its interpretation—the adults were entitled to interpret the map according to their world view. It is important to assert and question the assumption that, by inviting children to draw their landscape, power was being returned to the children. Children are already agentic and powerful and inscribe the land with their histories and narratives in ways unimagined by adults.

Another important consideration is that in requesting children to draw the map on a standardized sheet is to reassert the same structure of adulthood, meaning that there can never be a “real” Child-Map as it will always be viewed within the structure of adulthood. The representation of the map is still within the discourse of structure, which is applied to the

children's landscape, with the assumption that it can become intelligible to the adult. Talking about children through the lens of an adult grid is to say, "these cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid" (Bhabha & Rutherford, 1990, p. 208). It is only through the map that children's complex territories could be arranged into standardized grids of intelligibility. To invite children to create representations of their space in any form of their choice would have opened the possibility of receiving representations that would have been too difficult for adults (and even the researcher) to comprehend. This comprehension was, however, important because the Child-Map project was embedded in the larger question of renovation, but was also significant because the comprehension of the children's world according to their own frameworks was the only way adults have learned to understand children. Any understanding of children's voices then had to be translated to a voice understandable to the adult. Thus, any system of transformation and empowerment, no matter how creative and nuanced, always re-creates and exists in a system that makes sense to the hegemonic order (adult). It also perpetuates a system where children are believed to fully exercise their agency in a language that mostly makes sense to the adult. In this way, child-centric research can perpetuate the very model that it is trying to oppose.

Thus, I am left wondering if the cartographic map, with its allegiance to the illusion of objectivity (blank screen), was actually too blank to inscribe the children's histories. The desire I am left with is how to read the map beyond the conventions of the codes. To consume a cartographic map requires that the user marks their signature and their territories through the pen or pencil on their individual maps (paper map held in hand). How should I prepare the Child-Map to adequately capture the children's stories, their recreations, their amusement, their games, tales, or poems recited by the land and invitation of the space? I argue that it was the pins,

entering from the side which fractured the Child-Map and the blankness of the map, and allowed the children, as both map producers and map creators, to assert themselves. The special pins invited the children to re-write their name, to put the structure of the play (the monument), territorialized the Child-Map with local names, local interests, and allowed them to incorporate the displaced territories together as a community. They could now alter, produce, and reproduce their own map as a collective map. Each child brought their own imagination of their space into the map, their own stories, and thereby thickening the map by producing a diverse version of the map that made it their own. The pin fostered the potential to sustain territories that might have been omitted during the creation of the Child-Map (especially as it was part of a class activity) as they were too embarrassing or fracturing to be on the map, such as the disliked places: the compost, or dumpster which could have distorted the image of the school or made the authorities uncomfortable are examples in point.

Through the Child-Map, each child found a way to receive the map in their own way. Unlike other child-centric research, which only produced individualized maps contributing to the generation of a personalized subjectivity, the uniqueness of the Child-Map was that, instead of producing an isolated subjectivity reflected through an apprehension of the map as “my map”, it authored and co-authored other subjectivities which were similar, dissimilar, and conflicted with that of the child’s. The pins on the map allowed for a culmination of new forms of subjectivity, which was not based on the child’s own pins, or individual needs, but rather through a humble invitation to other pins and other places. The multiple stories could stay and each child could see the map and inscribe through the map their own vantage points in relation to other vantage points. In encountering other places and other viewpoints, their personal and private territories were not threatened or interrupted, and the map could sustain deeper meaningful engagement

with personal and communal modes of being. The pins did not create difference to be marginalized or pathologized, and every single voice or pin could be received in the honor of forming multiple representations of the Waldorf playground. The disorientation of the space brought re-orientation in terms of the relationship to places and peers, and while some pins marked protest, they could still exist and be received by the community. This care to preserve individual, singular, and different voices not only disrupted the community's understanding of the children, but also questioned a normative understanding of childhood. The children and the parents were made aware of the other presences that they were either indirectly aware of, or those which were easier to disregard, and which, in turn, created a different and nuanced understanding of the diversity of childhoods and pluralities that existed in and on the school grounds.

The map now re-territorialized by the pins, fostered space and identity as fluid, cluttered, dynamic and, more importantly, relational. The pins entered through the gap, opening up what Brown and Knopp (2008) called “multiple forms of representation, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple interpretations” (p.55). These multiple interpretations resisted exclusion of singular pins (voice, identity, and experience) and allowed for an appreciation and invitation to a more plural landscape of knowledge production and inter-subjectivity. Each child and each pin could sustain and maintain irreducible singularities, in which each child's subjectivity and uniqueness could be preserved. Even when the pins were clustered together in one area, or sparsely populated in another, the singular or lone voice could co-exist and was not lost in the whole. The pin also achieved its special status because of its adherence to anonymity while still preserving knowability (the ability to recognize one's own pin in the sea of other pins). Thus, the pins were

not simply a frequency or numbers that would reduce children's voices into an (in)significant numerical.

Through the pin, the map also retained its quality of openness, and dynamism, resisting unidirectionality and stasis. Each tear, each pin, each scratch added a new layer — a new story, a new re (presentation), and different ways of authoring and reading the map— making the map: “detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (Deleuze and Guatari, 1987, p.12). Kitchin, Perkins & Dodge (2009) says, “maps are in a constant state of becoming” (p.20). This multiple entryway disrupted a center or centered structure. No one place, no one narrative could become hegemonic. The Child-Map and the pins did not aim towards consistency or an amalgamation of children's voices or places. It is also important to assert that the involvement of parents in the Child-Map study allowed for a unique perspective to emerge that other researchers had not engaged with.

The parents' involvement in the study also enriched the Child-Map project as it fostered a unique and singular relationality⁴⁷, perhaps even allowed what Levinas (1961/1979) calls a *saying*: where the speaker's subjectivity, responsibility, and singularity cannot be replaced by any other. To quote Biesta (2004), “The mother cannot speak to the child with the borrowed, representative voice” (p. 316). Parents (mothers) and children share an inter-subjectivity that goes beyond the relevance and meaning of words. The mother or parent can only speak through her or his voice, which evokes a more personal and responsive relation beyond what is said (the representative of the word). This adherence to relationality and process liberates the researcher from the responsibility of achieving transformation through the data or the interpretation by

⁴⁷ Even as we remember that it is important to speak about the power dimensions this dyad evoked in the study, which I will address in a latter part of this chapter.

writing it in the form of a report. However, it returns back data interpretation and collection to the moment of the (saying and said) process that happened in the dyad and could not be replaced or recreated by any other dyad (child-researcher). The parents' encounter with their children and the earnestness and attentiveness with which they encountered their own and their children's subjectivities was a moment of human contact premised in difference which could not be summated in the results of this data. These moments in the child-parent relationality will be difficult to re-create again and with another adult (researcher/teacher). These moments also existed outside the realm of data gathering and were more valuable than what was desired by the explicit purpose of the project aimed at understanding the liked and disliked places on the school ground.

I bring these stories and dialogue to the center of this work because it released the desire to create results (product). The opening of this dialogue also meant that the map and pins were not restricted to the narrative that the researcher desired to author or author-ize. Even though the initial agenda was embedded in understanding the renovation process, as a primary researcher, I never desired or found significance in counting the number of pins that would have reduced these irreducible voices to frequencies and signification. The map and the pins found positionality as they were mounted in the front hall, along the entryway, fostering multiple entryways (voices). The positionality of the map was critical because it contributed to the process of the dialogue, and brought the research back into the community, to be ingested, or rejected.

This witnessing assured that the pins and the voices of the community will not be lost in research diaries or compiled into the archival history of the school. Standing in the hallway speaking to the school, adults, and to each other, the map and the pins needed to be present

(maybe to the point of haunting) so that it does not get forgotten as a history in the memory of the school. This display in the public hallway is also unique because it brings the children's voices into a public space with a communal audience of adults and other children. It shifts their voice from a private, intimate exchange with parents to a public, democratic political process. This remembrance of the child's voice or speech represented by the map and the pin was also important as the dialogue was in the context of school renovation and offered the children a productive moment of resistance. The personal stories that existed on the map generated resistance by creating a real-time reflexivity on both the present parts of the space (voices and identity) and the future of what might transpire and could be nurtured in the map.

In being present to the Child-Map in their own personal way is then a liberation for the parents and children to take from the research what was significant for them, rather than wait for the outside researcher to inform *significance* in the form of reports and presentation (data analysis). Benson and Nagar (2006) say:

The notion that the only meaningful way to author something is to be the person(s) writing and publishing a project not only betrays a deep prejudice against formally non-/less literate people and practices, it seriously undermines the critical role that collective intellectual and political journeys play in the making of analysis and authorship (p.589)

The Child-Map's presence in the hallway made the relevance of the Child- Map for the community go beyond the data results (or results of this dissertation), or rather, the data was present to the community to consume in their own personal, significant way. Positioned in the hallway of the school, the Child-Map also disrupted the boundaries of institutional arrangements where educational borders, play spaces, and dialogue can often be age segregated. The Child-Map with its multifarious pins evidently connected different generations and their experiences of

dissimilarity and similarity of liked and disliked places, thereby encouraging them to reject age-based assumptions. These intergenerational voices which were embedded on the map not only created potential for profound learning, reflection, and cognizance about oneself and one's own cohort, but also about others and their identities. Thus, it possibly fostered building diverse social connections that were not restricted by age cohort. In witnessing the divergent and convergent pins on the map, children perhaps were able to notice that the overgeneralization and feelings of commonality sensed within one's cohort can be presumptuous, and possibly find inter-cohort connections and intergenerational affiliation. As a result, awareness of existing differences and commonalities between generational positions on the Child-Map created new possibilities of intergenerational solidarity, interaction, conflict, or ambivalence.

In witnessing each other's places on the map, the children, teachers, and parents were also called to hear the stories associated with each place marked by the pin. Through walking and marking with the pin, each participant takes up a little bit of the place themselves and left behind a bit of themselves—adding their own narrative self to the map. The pins contained the short stories of the lived experience of each child, providing an insight into their social, cultural, and historical narratives. A pin in this manner also served as a memory hook, where others (such as older children and their parents), who had possibly lost connections with previously inhabited places on the ground, were invited in to look back down the memory lane. These previous inhabitants could now viscerally remember their own stories, their own histories, and their own disappeared connections with the place. It is also through the visibility of diverse narratives and memories accorded by the map that future generations who will experience a different play space after the renovation, will be invited in to listen, see, and feel the stories and experiences that once inhabited the space. New and future generations, through the visibility of the pin, would have

knowledge of the past, knowing what has changed and what has stayed the same. Through the collective pins on the map, each member of the Waldorf School could communally remember events that they had not personally experienced, thereby becoming vicariously hooked in other people's experience over many generations. The Child-Map then can be understood as the artifact of the generations of voices coming together.

The other significant intergenerational aspect of the Child-Map was that it fostered passing of knowledge between generations. The eighth graders, in employing their cartographic skills, had an opportunity to impart their formal and informal knowledge to other children, demonstrating to the younger generations competencies that are needed to be developed for the future. Eighth graders, through their intellectual and skill-based contribution, crafted a political canvas on which each member lived and on which the political experience of the school could be imprinted and come alive. It is also the parents and the teachers (the elder generation) who committed themselves to walk side by side with their children, guided their children through instructions of the study (do it this way, walk here, place pin here), coached their children to record their experiences in a mode that made their voices most visible, and most significantly handed down important language and political skills to their children. It is through this coaching that the younger generation could participate in the social as well as political life of their community, and felt being trusted to carry out something for others. The map and the embedded walk created an opportunity to disrupt the cultural and historical unidirectional passing of knowledge where wisdom is only passed from older adults to younger generation. The communal research was born as each member and generation of the community, from teachers to parents to children, passed their own cultural tools and entered the Child-Map study in their own complex ways. Although thinking and learning is often regarded as a private, solo activity, the

Child-Map research brought to light many ways that thinking involves interpersonal and community processes in addition to individual processes. It facilitated thinking that fostered collaboration and interaction. The Child-Map then was a rich multigenerational voice map which created a space where older and younger children, teachers, and parents can meet together in a complex and co-creative learning context.

As I write the accolades of this Child - Map and the acts of marking the pin, I am reminded of the ethos of this dissertation and my commitment to challenge the love letters that I write about myself, my research, and academia. As I come to the end of this chapter (and also the end of the dissertation) the promise of the lost letter that I had made to the readers comes hauntingly back again. As stated before, in writing the love letter, the lover always scratches, erases, and re-writes words that were desired to be addressed to the lover but were lost in the creation of a love letter. However, the ethos of writing the letter, in this case the research process, requires bringing back into focus the context of knowledge production, not in order to judge the efficiency of our methods, but to be suspicious of the innocence of our method.

Through a close responsiveness to the process, I see that there was a politics which existed outside the phenomenology of the map and the act of marking the pin. As mentioned before, the politics of the pin cannot be excluded from the politics of the map, which locked the child into a procedure (the method). The child could not put the pin anywhere they desired and it did not grant them the liberty to choose not to place the pin on the map and resist participation. As discussed before, our project of empowerment itself is embedded in the discourse of participation and thus excludes the understanding of the myriad complexities of non-participation. It is pertinent to note that dissent is especially important to consider when working with children, as children do not share the same right to consent and dissent in our research as

adults do. In consenting (with little room to dissent) to participate, children were invited into a system of empowerment, where conditions of their participation and the articulation of their voice was pre-decided. The location of the pin and its value system was already decided by the researcher, as the children were required to place their pin on liked and disliked places rather than anywhere on the map. The Child-Map study, with its adherence to the paradigm of the liked and disliked, re-created a polarization of the subjects' world that adults are used to: one thinking, one choice, one place, one vote. In such a process, as Said (1978) reminds us, the colonized is spoken as passive and spoken for, and does not control its own representation but is represented in accordance with a hegemonic impulse. In such a value system, the children were asked to mark a position, staking and externalizing an inner world of their place through only one pin. It was a tremendous statement to make, and the children resisted it, stating that they wanted more pins to identify important places and thereby more adequately express their inner worlds. The children are in a system where they are asked to externalize their identities, their voices, their places and their choice with one pin.

What is it that the children are asked to do? How is it acted? And how it is performed? It is performed in the system where the stakes are very high. The decision of the Child-Map is still preceded by the decision that there will be a renovation, which is not a choice in which children are included. However, children are given a *choice* (one pin each for liked and disliked) by the school community and the researcher (the messenger of good will). Though a choice, it also yet preserves the identity and hierarchical position of the giver and the receiver—it is the adult who is in the position of giving and the child in the position of receiving. The child has to not only accept the gift of one choice and one freedom, but also be grateful for receiving one. This

structure of empowerment then disregards that this limited freedom is embedded in a system of loss for the child: the loss of other beloved places.

The political empowerment through the pin and the map also became questionable as the pin was not a secret ballot. Parents were looking at, priming, hovering over the child, and marking the pin together with their child. Though it was an emotional moment in the study, it cannot be glorified through the discourse of political autonomy, as the process was not a mere *data collection* but was vigilantly recorded. The decision to involve the parents (and in other child-centric work, the researcher) and not asking the children to mark their pins independently from the adult rested in the IRB's writ that necessitated that the child (and their freedom) be protected by the presence of an adult. It is safe then to conclude that the children's freedom and their privacy is always in the realm of protection or surveillance, framed as protection. However, it is worth considering that the children's freedom and their privacy needed to be disciplined within an adult system. To extend this assertion further, children's autonomy is inherently disrupting and threatening to the adult system.

Children are always operating in multi-dimensional power relations. To the extent the child is marked as protected and in need of protection, he or she is in a relational dyad of protection to those who have power and who are authorized to protect. Thus, power and child empowerment are relational issues requiring joint collaboration. The movement towards power and empowerment cannot only be achieved by creating efficient child-friendly tools for better data collection, but can be fostered by asking difficult questions. It seems that through this chapter, there have already been a few questions posed: what would it mean for the children to have multiple pins? What would it mean for the children to create their own emotional maps? Or

represent their space in forms chosen by them? And finally, what would it mean for them to place their pins in secrecy from adults?

As this chapter is coming to an end, I am mindful that I have not made claims, assertions, or even drawn conclusions. The only claim this chapter has made is to remind the readers how dangerous claims are to the politics of empowerment, and that the promise of empowerment is complex, even vaunted. This deliberation to turn the lens inwards was to extend an invitation to fellow academicians to think about what gets represented and what gets lost in academic and intellectual cultures. The purpose of this project is not whether this method or other child-centric methods are better, but rather to problematize any method that does not have the humility to complicate, destroy, or see the hidden gaps of their process. No trace or voice that feels rival to our research should be erased but should be invited to question the authority of the procedure and researcher's voice. We as researchers are called to be ready to change, to throw our assertions away, and to move into new directions, where we are *interrupted* in our work again. Most of the researcher's work is to listen to interruption and have a fragile sense of self; a self that is ready to change, modify, receive and invite the hospitality of the data. This allows a voice to emerge from the data that reintroduces us to our work. This is the climax that I have wanted to achieve through my work and which I await in anxious anticipation in the next and final chapter of this dissertation.

Chapter 6: Final Reflections— Hearing Accidental Voices

I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices, as if it had signaled to me by pausing, for an instant, in suspense. Thus there would be no beginning, and instead of being the one from whom discourse proceeded, I should be at the mercy of its chance unfolding, a slender gap, the point of its possible disappearance.
(Foucault, 1970/1981, p. 57)

I opened this project with the above quote from Foucault, and it seems necessary to return to it, not only as a reminder of where I started, but also to examine the journey's end (assuming for the moment that it does), as it were, in light of the promise of that beginning. In the introduction to this project, I aspired to focus on the dance of the visible and the invisible, to listen for, and be open to, unexpected voices which might interrupt and disrupt (to the point of haunting) not only my speech, but also my research. Furthermore, to follow Foucault, I wanted to receive "*that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me.*" Like Foucault, Mr. Kapasi from the *Interpreter of Maladies* (Lahiri, 1999) became an important companion in earlier chapters, writing this project in the ink and terms of both the love letter and the lost letter in research, i.e., giving space to not only the data that can be organized into thematic categories, but also to those voices that do not support the knowledge being produced; singular voices that could not be categorized into themes, or contradictory voices that co-existed with the dominant voices (themes). I hoped to speak in ways that may well have been sanctioned or even taboo in academia, and to break from the "traditional" dissertation that promised a linearity of an introduction, a literature review, method, analysis, discussion, and conclusion. I aimed to write in ways that challenged the hegemonic way of writing in which the researcher claimed sole or

singular authorship. I call to memory where I started in order to guide how I want to end, even if I don't, or the project does not.

As I enter the final chapter, there is a temptation to provide a final claim, an eureka insight, or a crystallized theory or conclusion(s). Discussions are about answers, explanations of one's thinking, justification of one's claims, and packaging one's research into unified and integrated solutions. The focus continues to be on me as the researcher, the primary author of this work who offers wisdom to the other. Such a discussion, however, would not do justice to the work that I had intended to do and might reduce child empowerment to technocratic and simplified theories that could be achieved in steps. Derrida (1990/2004) reminds us that a philosopher (which I also extend to include researcher) is like a "rag picker" that attends to and collects rugs and junk, by listening with a careful ear to voices that are silent, ignored, or which lie at the periphery. In identification with Derrida, I am reminded that, as a child, I made far too many trips to the junkyard, delving out pieces that were deemed useless or had fallen out of the dominant system. As a child-centric researcher, I identify with being the rag picker or the junk picker(over) who does not want to end her work with a grand narrative or grand claims, but is content, even desires, a messy text. This does not mean that one does not offer something, but instead one is forced to offer something difficult, authentic, complex and that which bears the unique signature of children.

I started the project by thematizing, by understanding, by coming to an arrangement—categorically and thematically. I followed the language of ontology, the language of methodology and procedure, which was significant, but it is now also important to undo what I have done- "a saying that must also be unsaid" (Levinas, 1983/1998, p.7). Capturing the language of the said and the saying, Levinas (1961/1979) articulates "The said is the fixed form",

that which thematizes, and saying is “the otherwise than being,” that which cannot “be exhausted in manifestation” (p.46). *Saying* for Derrida (1967/1976) captures a trace to something that cannot be captured in *said*. It is then in this chapter, that I make a move towards unsaying or undoing what has been done by the text (the dissertation). To think another way, the discussion will move away from what the data has said or meant, to how the experience and the voices of children can be acknowledged (Myers, 1999). My responsibility is to *saying* (or unsaying) and responding to the face of the other-- to the demands of the children, or to listen to the voices in my research that punctured our very attempts to make voices and data intelligible. It is in this chapter that I do not simply talk about the signification of the embedded walk, the Child-Map, the pin, or the ensemble voice, but rather the holes and the ruptures (the trace) left on the map, the ensemble voice, or the walk that carried the resistance of the child. This attending to the children’s voices in the realm of *saying* is the responsibility of the researcher that cannot be reduced into any banal form of empathy, where the adult tries to put oneself in the children’s shoes. I am still an adult (and I own that positionality), but I am taking the responsibility to bring forward their stories, and to listen to their voices (without a false hope of giving voice). It is my responsibility to respond to the unsaid or be hospitable to a betrayal that leaves open a fracture, a space for surprise and a “to come”. It is thus in this listening to the unsaid voices that “we take responsibility for the ghost of the past such that we can conjure the spectre of the future” (Laubscher, 2010, p. 56).

This discussion then listens to the incomprehensible, which cannot be classified, reported, compared, thematized, or explain what the children said, but attends to those moments that do violence to our themes, our explanation, and reasons. As Laubscher (2010) articulates “Where ethics, rather than knowledge, is at stake - or put differently, where knowledge is seen to be

given by an ethics, testimony is an unfurling unsaying” (p.61). I bring in voices of those who can no longer speak for themselves, which moves the role of child-centric research from the role of information gathering, to name and attest to testify to the transformation- “a testifying to a seeing that is a seeing anew, and differently” (Laubscher, 2010, p. 59), as if we are witnessing and being interrupted by the event for the first time.

The Event: An Interruption

As PlaceLab members gathered to discuss the progress of the Child-Map study in our weekly PlaceLab meeting, Ms. Mahone informed the PlaceLab group that the seventh and the eighth graders were alerted to the possibility of plans to renovate or remove the “yellow hut”—a small hut located at the corner of the playground. This proposal was instigated after some of the younger children who participated in the study had marked the “yellow hut” with red pins, establishing it as a “disliked place” and reported that the space was “dirty” and “claustrophobic”. The teachers also reported that the structure was “problematic” because they could not see students in and behind the hut. When the 7th and 8th graders noticed all the red pins accruing around this yellow hut on the playground map, they collectively responded with their own perspective. They organized a movement to put all their [like/green] pins on the yellow hut, effectively protesting against plans for redevelopment that would leave them displaced. The students also used the white paper sheets provided by PlaceLab as a political platform that spoke to the emotional significance of *their* yellow hut for them and demanded that it be preserved.

As we heard of their creative, passionate movement, some of us were in awe, some were amused, but all were appreciative of these youths’ agency and their passion for the place. I felt a sense of pride and ownership in our capacity to engender a research space that empowered them to organize their movement. The story of the children’s movement emerged from the margins,

but their unique and collective voice lingered with me. This section then will focus on (find an entrance into and through) this unexpected opening in the Child-Map study, where the children hijacked the research process for their own personal and political agendas. This unexpected voice entering the research was a political interruption that we had not imagined for our work, or rather, we did not expect that children will speak to us in this nuanced way. With this creative resistance, children reintroduced us to our own research, complicating who was the agent of the study and who was empowering whom. This was the rich imprint that children made: illuminating that the child-map research was authentically empowering when it moved away from the researchers' set patterns and the participants made it their own.

This incident regarding the yellow hut captured the essence of this dissertation, which aspired to honor the diverse and complex voices of the participants' empowerment. Taking this moment as the personal signature that children marked on this research, I use Derrida's (2000) notion of hospitality (the guest and the host), to complicate commonplace methods of distinguishing between the guest (participant) and the host (researcher). These are the voices to which I now implore: *Come in. Welcome. Be my guest.*

Who is visiting? Who is the guest?

In her description of hospitality, Irigaray (1999) invokes the image of an empty room—a guest room—waiting for the other to enter and take rest. At the door of this house, one can envision Octave, Klossowski's character whom Derrida (2000) analyzes as a desperate host, standing by and waiting for the stranger to enter the house. Irigaray (1999) comments that the guest room, whose aesthetics is designed according to the needs of the host, maintains the power of that host to remain master of the premises. Similarly, Derrida reminds us that within the invitation to "Make yourself at home," the "terms and conditions" of that invitation is already

communicated: “please feel at home, but, remember this is not your home, but mine, and you are expected to respect the conditions of my home” (Caputo, 1997, p.111). Although the “welcome” is an invitation for the guest, it is communicated that the host does not surrender his or her position (identity) as master. The host calls for identification (who are you and where are you from), decides the language in which the guest must speak, and establishes the condition of hospitality within the home. Hospitality requires that one must be a proprietor, an owner of one’s own home—one must own a home to surrender a home. Thus, there is an inherent self-limitation in the very nature of hospitality.

The laws of hospitality, which sanction the role of host as master of the house run parallel with the norms that position the researcher as master of ‘her’ work. As researchers, we choose to invite research participants (guests) who are like us, who speak our language, or who will behave appropriately – not attempt to take over, infiltrate, invade, rob, or violate. Even when we choose participants who are different from us (and thus become denoted as the other) the language of how to communicate, how to comprehend, are inflicted by us. Through our research designs (which generally prioritize, above all else, how best to collect and interpret data that the researcher is seeking), the conditions of home are established. Certain conditions are imposed upon the participants (guests) without so much as an afterthought.

In our Child-Map study, we had thought of a unique way to facilitate the voices of the children and their parents to describe to us the places they liked and disliked. Yet, via the very implementation of our research design, while necessary to the research process, we/I as a researcher also imposed certain conditions on who could speak and how they would do so. With the parameters of our Child-Map study, a guest room of sorts— the child-led tours in which they documented their experiences on the blank sheet, and marked their places on the map,

established a guest room that instituted the conditions through which parents and children could communicate, as well as the mode of communication (verbal and pictorial). We required our guests (children and parents) to speak in our mother tongue, the tongue of academia, which would be fruitful for the researchers first and then derivatively, the school authorities, who had initially posed the question to the community about renovation. This request to speak in our foreign language, is “the first violence to which foreigners are subjected too” (Derrida, 2005, p. 68). Giving the example of Socrates as foreigner, Derrida (2000) asks, “Must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language . . . in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country?” (p.15). Just as Socrates is questioned in the language of the court foreign to him, children and parents were asked to speak in a nonnative, research-coded language that “assimilates and adjusts” them to the home of our research.

All we as researchers could give were conditions in which children could feel empowered in the confines of our language (academic tongue) with the hope of hearing the children’s language. In the language of the pin, in the language of the crayons, the blank sheet, the invitation (requirement) to walk, and place the pin on the map, the conditions of listening, hearing and comprehending was established. This sense of language kept the other locked into conditions of pre-established modes of being, as the children and parents had to follow a script that was not their own making, or was unfamiliar and foreign to them. They had to follow the sequential steps-- take an embedded walk, note their observations on the ensemble voice, place the pin on the map. Parents and children were required to speak, write, and draw in a language that inherently would make sense or could be interpreted by the researcher. Thus, this system of transformation and empowerment, no matter how creative and nuanced, re-created and

contributed to a system that easily fit within the hegemonic system (adult/researcher). One is confronted with the powerful question that Spivak (1988) asks; “Can the subaltern speak?” without the intervention of well-intentioned intellectuals. Her answer to this powerful question is a hopeless no. She says, “The subaltern cannot speak” (p.104). Spivak accuses that research is always in a way hegemonic (colonial) in defining the other and making the subject as the object of study and as something that knowledge should be extracted from and brought back “here”. As advocates of political transformation or in writing child-centric research (like the post-colonial writers) we continue to make attempts to liberate the other, in creative and nuanced languages, but always constitute the other in the language and representation that makes sense to the dominant discourse. In such a writing, the subjectivity and authority of the researcher is preserved as the child is asked to speak in my language and politics is prescribed as that which can be authorized by discursive agents themselves. It perpetuates a system where children are believed to fully exercise their agency in a language that was meaningful (comprehensible) to the adult. hooks says, “Dare I speak to you in a language that will be beyond the boundaries of domination-a language that will not bind you, fence you in, or hold you (1989, p.16)” Thus, any intervention from the outside to revolutionize their condition have to be concealed so that their words could be heard by the researcher.

However, while adopting a critical gaze does demythologize and de-romanticize the Child-Map, it also creates a binary between the researcher as the all-powerful speaking subject, and parents and children as the passive recipient, which is in danger of creating a representation of the parents and children as voiceless (the very condition hooks [1988] and Spivak [1993] are resisting). It is therefore important to look at the hidden, the traces, and the gaps and say, “yes to that which interrupts (our) project” (Spivak 1993, cited in Pierre, 1997, p. 178). The Child-Map

study was designed for, and was successful in, creating hospitable spaces where the voices of otherwise marginalized groups could be formed, listened to, and included with respect to their unique ways. Recall the image of Octave, the desperate host, expecting and not expecting the foreigner. Derrida (2000) argues that the very condition of hospitality requires that the host is surprised and interrupted. Opening the door into our research space, we were not aware of what might have come or what was indeed coming. Independent of our meticulously planned method, the children spoke and used their voices to hijack the research for their own unique needs. The design of the child-led tours with the possibility to mark their views on a blank sheet, and the marking of the pins, were designed to “give” children and parents tools that could empower them to speak. The seventh and the eighth graders re-appropriated, resisted, and manipulated our research techniques beyond what we had anticipated, in turn making us (the researchers and school authorities) listen to collective voices that we did not expect. De Certeau (1988) refers to this dialectic as a spontaneous and unpredictable process of tactics and counter-tactics in research. These unexpected entries also provided us with rich and novel insights into the children’s behavior, and their ways of exercising and negotiating within institutional spaces.

Within the condition of the Child-Map, children were required to speak in an academic language, but they shifted the realms of power and resisted us using our own language. Adrienne Rich (1950) presents this dilemma of resisting in the oppressor’s language: “this is the oppressor’s language yet I need it to talk to you”. The children at various points not only modified our language, but subverted the discourse in a way that inscribed the resistance. It was at this moment that we were confronted by the distance between what the researcher intended to mean or do, or what the researcher intended to command, and then be overpowered by an interruption - a surprise - that captivated the researcher and research itself. This interruption

resisted attempts, within our own language and our own structure (research) to provide complete empowerment and/or insight. Instead, it was the voice that came from the children's own language that challenged and brought forth the limits, insight and meaning that we had not even attributed to our work.

Researchers such as Briggs (1986) have commented on this tendency of participants to re-appropriate the interview questions, often giving answers to questions that the researcher has not posed (or thought to pose) or answering in ways that are commensurate with their own agendas and needs. Some researchers might suspect these developments as terrifying intrusions that must be kept out of the research. Van Manen (1990) finds it hardly surprising that the term 'rigor' adopted by research originally meant "stiffness" and "hardness" (p.51). In traditional research, this moment of the children's protests would be an anomaly, an outlier, absurd and would need to be tamed and kept out of framework of the research. Such an interruption in the Child-Map project and in other research produces new understandings, what Derrida (2002) calls: "The autonomy of the system "deconstructs" (not destructs) via exposure to a force that is other than the system, revealing a limit to the system's efforts at totalization" (p.4). Foucault (1972) might have attributed this interruption as the failure of the dominant discourse to discipline the system of knowledge. It self-deconstructs, uproots itself, and independently emerges through its autochthonous grounds. Beyond our data collection, this new, unpredictable, unforeseeable foreignness (children's voices) grew in the system and resisted, dislocated, ruptured the research from being fixed, and redeemed the authority and sovereignty of the children/guests. The foreignness was born in the moments of research that disturbed the system and rendered it absurd. This violence, Spivak (1988) reminds us, cannot be offered from the outside; the system needs to be disrupted from within. It is this entry of the foreigner, or what

Derrida (following Levinas) calls the “other” or the “wholly other” (Caputo, 1997, p. 42) that overtook the Child-Map research and the work I aspire to do. This is what Derrida (2000) would have postulated as the moment of hospitality in the Child-Map study. One is reminded of Levinas (1981), for whom the arrival or welcoming of the foreigner interrupts the circle, transgressing and breaching it, taking away the security of the circle, thus preventing it from closing upon itself. It is this interruption and surprise that Derrida calls the historical; the singularity of the unique event, which is irreducible, cannot be reduced to another form (Caputo, 1997). In Deleuze’s (1995) terms, such an ethics demands that we become worthy of events in all their singularity, rather than seeking to close them off.

Through this rupture, our ipseity as the researchers (host) was interrupted. The interruption marked a stunning reversal in which the children (the guest) had occupied the home and the masters (us) became a guest or host-age. Still (2010) points out that in French, “the hôte is both the one who gives, *donne*, and the one who receives, *reçoit*” hospitality (p.193). The advantage of the French Hôte is its reversibility—its hint in the direction of guest as the host of the host. Derrida (1999) comments:

the hôte who receives (the host), the one who welcomes the invited or received the hôte (the guest), the welcoming hôte who considers himself the owner of the place, is in truth a hôte received in his own home. He receives the hospitality that he offers in his own home; he receives it from his own home—which, in the end does not belong to him. The hôte as host is a guest. (p.41)

This arrival of the children’s own resistance (the foreignness), turned the Child-Map study (home) inside out and, in Miller’s (1985) words, the researchers (host) became the guests and the children (guest) became the host. In creating a space of welcome for the children/guests, I, the

researcher/host, was called to give up the security and authority of the research design (home). It was the presence of the foreigner (moments of resistance) that put my authority into question. It was the children who became the master of the research design/home and we, the researchers and the school authorities, became what Derrida might hyperbolically coin, their host-ages! Levinas (1981) would say “The subject is hostage” (p.112). The children also overtook the research by speaking in their own unique language. As Derrida (2000) argued, the conditions of (in) hospitality require that the foreigner speak in our language, yet when the children hijacked the research they created their own language, forcing us as the researchers to listen to their voice. The children transcended the research tools to speak in their own language— in their own silence, in their own secret, and in their own protest.

Geertz (1973) calls such a disruption of technique an “accident host.” Such a transgression of our Child-Map method resisted the commodification of research practices and reified that children will act in unexpected ways and no amount of meticulously planned technique will alter this. Indeed, to do so would be contrary to the spirit in which child- centric research rests. Cresswell (1996) offer another unique perspective and makes a distinction between transgression and resistance itself:

“transgression, in distinction to resistance, does not, by definition, rest on the intentions of actors but on the results-on the ‘being noticed’ of a particular action” [...] “Resistance occurs behind the backs of those who are being resisted” (p. 23).

Thus, the acts of transgression increase their power from befalling in presence of, and being noticed by, those being resisted. The difference is that these acts may not even be perceived as crossing “some line that was not meant to have been crossed” (Cresswell 1996, p. 23). De Certeau (1988) calls these moments tactics which are not in direct opposition to the system that

are fleeting, but manipulate power as a transgressive tactic which may not have been how others envisioned resistance, and demonstrates how participants could use the tools of resistance in a different way.

In using the pins and in writing their opinions on the ensemble voice, the children did not engage in actions that were unacceptable in the system, but in what Domosh (1998) calls “polite” “petty” acts which were not obvious, occurred in negligible ways, and which resisted by not completely upsetting the dominant system. The act of marking the pin and writing on the ensemble voice existed in front of those adults who were forced to notice, yet children did not resist the system by crossing a line or participating in ways that would have termed the research invalid. Instead, they created a room to be heard. That the adults were hearing this was important, not only because the study was conducted against and in the backdrop of the discourse of school renovation, but also re-asserted the power of the children. The children’s resistance also broke the myth that empowerment, opposition, and defiance are not grand or radical movements but can only exist and be nourished at the margins. This posits a new way of thinking about resistance and empowerment such that those actions that are more salient, persistent, and are often unnoticed, form the condition for larger and more noticeable counter-voices. It is these movements of resistance which occur at the margins, that hooks (1989) reminds us are not only sites of deprivation, but also sites of radical possibility and struggle against the hegemonic discourses. The voice of the children’s resistance then speaks a counter-language that reformulates the adult’s language. This is the creativity of the marginalized resistance it uses that which can repress to resist. Moreover, it is also important for the children’s voices of resistance to follow the framework of the research system or the ritualized patterns that offered protection from being crushed by the dominant system.

It is also important to recognize that besides the event of the eight graders using pins and ensemble voices to their advantage, there were other central moments in the Child-Map study where children resurrected their power. For instance, some children reclaimed their freedom and agency by dissenting to participate and not following the instruction (the language of the research) at all and by saying to the adult community: “I don’t care” about your means and methods to listen to me and grant me power. The children thus participated (or resisted) in the research, but in a way which did not adhere to the adult oriented (research centric) definition of participation. They did not contribute their voices (good response) in what the adults considered to be benevolent and empowering for them-- speaking for their children’s own freedom. Children, by choosing to remain silent, by saying no, or by speaking in ways that differed from the desire of their parents, exercised their own agency and their own empowerment and thus moved from the position of being silenced to choosing to be silent. Children also resisted the adults’ and the researcher’s conception of empowerment by requesting more pins. While the adults had learned to compromise their *identitary* position to one spot, one identity, children resisted and challenged this totalization of their life-worlds to one fixed point (one pin) or into the valued spectrum of liked and disliked, and communicated their desire for multiple pins. In some ways, the children reintroduced us to our own research and thus complicated who was the agent of the study and who was empowering whom.

The reversibility paradox between host and guest also allowed us to reconsider who was the original host of our research: Were we researchers the ‘real’ hosts or was it the school authorities who invited us, or perhaps the children who welcomed us into their intimate places? Such ambiguity raised broader questions about mastery and ownership of the Child-Map research project. Indeed, with the authority to design and implement a research study, and by

instituting laws and rules governing the arrival of the participants, the researcher operated with security as the sovereign owner of the work. However, the researcher was always entering the play spaces (home) of the other, an external provocateur, who was the master of the research, who rented the home to the researcher. It is then in sharing their voices and secrets that children offered a gift to us by interrupting and nourishing the boundaries of the researcher and research.

Through this interruption or the arrival of the foreigner, the host is gifted with the key of the house. This entrance of the children's resistance laid bare their assumptions about our world, conceptual, perceptual, linguistic, thereby disrupting or making implicit explicit. Derrida (2000) claims that "we thus enter from the inside: the master of the house is at home, but nonetheless he comes to enter his home through the guest—who comes from outside" (p. 125). Thus, we enter or re-enter our own research through the participants. As researchers, we were not yet aware that the pins or papers we provided could be taken up as a political tool of resistance. The children made us re-enter our design/home as a dwelling transformed, and not entirely of our own construction.

Derrida (1997) claims that in opening the door to the other or waiting in messianic anticipation, there is also a hope that no one might enter. In opening of the door of hospitality, we do not know who might enter. The coming of the other is not always a gift, but also brings violence—new rules, new demands, new desires. It brings in the bizarre, the absurd, the tamed, and the alien. Hospitality, Derrida wryly observes, literally and figuratively embodies hostility. He further reminds us that the etymology of the word derives from the Latin word *hospe*, which is formed from *hostis*, which meant a "stranger" and came to take on the meaning of the enemy or "hostile stranger (*hostilis*), + *pets* (*potis*, *pores*, potential *ho* have power) (Caputo, 1997, p.117). Derrida (2000) uses the analogy of pregnancy or a Trojan horse to highlight the argument

that hospitality harbors an enemy or threat. In another reading, the guest can be positioned as a parasite, the etymology coming from the Greek, *parasitos*, which originally had a positive reference, a fellow guest or someone sharing a food with you (Miller, 1987). This opening of the door by the researcher is always a threat to one's own understanding of the world and legitimacy of our worldview.

In the act of invitation by which the school authorities opened their doors to us researchers and research participants, they also inadvertently facilitated a space through which their very authority as hosts might be reversed or dismantled. Derrida (2000) suggests that the question of and from the foreigner puts the very host in question. In their description of the “yellow house,” the children were really speaking to the school authority through our research. Participants explicitly challenged the authority of the school and teachers with their usage of the word “vulture” or school as “unreal.” The eighth graders demanded to be heard: “I hear there is talk about eliminating some of these places and if so I will be really angry [...] I will be really mad/sad if they knock it down.” It is perhaps especially to those voices that are not hospitable, that the researcher must offer a place. As Derrida says: “I must offer my place there where no one can offer a place in my place” (quoted in Still 2010, p. 131). With this new arrival, one sees that there was an emergence of a discourse that could not be tamed, and that paralyzed the system on its arrival. It is this arrival of a new discourse, that is the “violence we do to the world” (Foucault, 1979, p.67). Derrida (1999) reminds us that absolute hospitality allows for—even beseeches—a sort of epistemic violence. This hospitality held the school system hostage and besieged them to accept voices that were against them. The children used the ensemble voices and the pins to communicate school spaces that were messy, dirty, gross and ugly and spaces that were encroached by adult activities. The ensemble voices and the pin became the

grievance box, and allowed them to express their discontentment with adults (school authorities) by frequent usage of the punitive (violent) phrase “this is stupid.” We heard a sense of urgency and an effort to point out that these changes they were demanding were reasonable and felt were obvious to the adult (and thus making it stupid) and would not cause the adults/school authority that much effort or inconvenience to undertake. The school and the adults had to hear and respond to hostile (voice that makes other a hostage) voices of frustration and dissatisfaction that the invitation of research had elicited.

We might ask, who is affected by this violence? Derrida affirms that hospitality is never always fully open; there is always some violence. The protests of the seventh and the eighth graders were initiated in response to concerns the younger children had towards the “yellow hut.” They flagged this structure as a place they disliked because it was seen as dirty and claustrophobic, and teachers said they could not see students in and behind the structure. How can we be hospitable to the concerns of these other guests who were also calling for a response? Did the research, by asking children to provide an identity (grade name), already create an inhospitable guideline of exclusion and inclusion of children’s voices? Or is the hospitality of our research really about keeping all the contradictory voices alive, not giving preference to any one voice, but instead representing a mosaic of voices (rather than melting pot) that inflect the landscape of communal life? For these 7th and the 8th grade students, the hut was a dwelling that afforded a safe haven as well as secure base for going forward and venturing into newer capacities (identities and relationships). For the yellow hut which became the doorstep of conflict was a home to few who found freedom to engage with the world and holding authority over who may enter the home as guest and who will be left out. Home is no longer one place, hooks (1989) says,

“Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontier of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal, fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting.” (p. 36)

For this is the truth of the community what is home, familiar, and snug, for one is a dark, suffocating and claustrophobic for another.

This suffocation or encounter of discordance is also another moment of hospitality which freed the research from identity politics. Derrida (2000) reminds us that the first violence to the guest (children) is to ask questions embedded in identity: What is your name (anonymous coded number on the pins)? Where are you from? (grade); What do you want? (places you like and dislike). Based on these questions, which are significant for the research, we would have established law or concepts in our theory that would have excluded the children’s voices or included them into simplified categories arranged thematically according to grades. However, in the Child-Map study we witnessed and invited the conflicting voices (the parasite or foreigner), singular, excluded, multiple, marginalized voiced that resisted claims of a collective identity, and instead based identity and places in the rigorous narrative of tensions and difference. Such a system invited the creation of multiplicity where both ideas that are too contradictory are true, could sustain moments of conflict, could welcome new, creative and fluid spaces of speaking and understanding diverse experience of oppression and resistance. Objectivity is assumed, and as Spivak (1988) warns, the benevolent “construc [tion of] a homogenous Other only reassures our place in the seat of the Same or the Self” (p.288, as cited in Fine, 1994, p.76). However, the ensemble voices and the pin on the map demonstrated the complexity of childhood by bringing

converging, diverging, and conflicting voices to the same platform. Such diverging voices resisted the most active and dominating children or parental voices from assimilating into a hegemonic center. Through the embedded walk, and tracing voices on the ensemble voices, as well as the use of the pins, the children disrupted the adults' conception of childhood and resisted representations of childhood in the image of adulthood (emerging adults) i.e., like the colonizer who created the devalued representation of the colonized, the adult forms an image of the child as a miniature adult soon progressing into a civilized adult. These contradictory and heterogeneous voices that could not be thematized could lead to an assumption that the Child-Map study lacks *rigor* (in the traditional sense of research which is embedded in finding sameness) However, these voices pushed the frontiers of the research and transgressed the boundaries which regulated the freedom of the anomalies that entered into our research and made our research truly hospitable and authentic.

These disruptions were not good or bad, but ruffled and agitated the safety of writing, planning, and thinking about children and empowerment from an inclusive perspective. Grappling with similar questions, Derrida (1997) was against the usage of the term community, which always implies a “munity” against the other, excluding and creating boundaries that mark inside from outside. By keeping the identity alive it always keeps the distance between the other and I. If a community welcomes, it loses the structure based on identity, whereas if it keeps the identity alive, it becomes unwelcoming (Caputo, 1997). Derrida (1997) questions the privilege that Heidegger accords to gathering which leaves little room for disruption and he emphasizes that such a globalizing gathering has no place for radical otherness, which is also directly in the heart (and margins) of what a community is and does. For Derrida, the structure of community rests upon dissociation and separation. Quoting Levinas (1981), he calls for a “relationless

relation or relation without relation” (pp.84-85), a relation in which the other remains transcendental or irreducible. One is here reminded of Gayatri Spivak (1988) and hooks (1989) who urged the dominant voices (researchers) to stop writing about the other, to know the other, or give voice to the other and instead, listen to the incoming plurality of voices of those who have been othered as constructors and agents of knowledge. This is also a move away from practices which label children as oppressed, and urges us to document evidence of struggle, resistance, and counter hegemony (Fine, 1994) that always co-exist with the hegemonic center. Such a formulation moves away from the law of gathering (what gather itself together) to a movement towards dis-adjustment and disjuncture.

With the arrival of foreignness, we are confronted with this communal tension that concedes an “aporia” in the very structure of hospitality. According to Derrida (1997), this tension and instability are not merely systemic failures, but instead preserve the very idea of hospitality itself, ensuring that the system remains open and free from always being closed within itself. Caputo (1997) says:

“it is the condition of possibility (and impossibility) of hospitality. Like everything else in deconstruction, the possibility of hospitality is sustained by its impossibility; hospitality really starts to get under way only when we “experience” (which means to travel or go through) this paralysis (the inability to move).” (p. 110)

Recognizing this tension inherent to the system, we are confronted by the question: who may be identified as the host? And, who is the guest(s)? If we as researchers are guests, then the children made us feel at home by giving us the gift of their voice. If the children were our guests, then our gift of research created a space to respond to the school authorities and be heard. Finally, if the school authorities were the hosts then they were given the overwhelming gift of being privy to

voices that silently yet aggressively agitated the currents of eighth graders' resistance. The researcher began to ask, "Who's doing this work after all?" begging the question even of authorship. Romanyshyn (2013) describes this process eloquently:

The work that the researcher is called to do makes sense of the researcher as much as he or she makes sense of it. Indeed, before we understand the work we do, it stands under us. Research as a vocation, then, puts one in service to those unfinished stories that weigh down upon us individually and collectively as the wait and weight of history. As a vocation, research is what the work indicates. It is re-search, a searching again of what has already made its claim upon us and is making its claim upon the future. (p. 113)

In responding to these reversible dynamics, one is hooked by the structure of responsibility and responsiveness to the other, that each of us are now connected with. Derrida (2002) claims, "Hospitality is the deconstruction of the at-home; deconstruction is hospitality to the other" (p. 364). It is in this invitation of hospitality that there is a presence of response, a yes. The researchers and the school authorities are called to respond and not merely out of duty, but in fact as a promise to continue to respond with a "yes." This yes, in research, comes prior to any formal invitation or research question; it is a yes to the foreignness of the other.

There is no linear origin or telos to this "yes". The Waldorf school said yes to us researchers in their invitation, and we replied with another yes, and the children said yes again. Derrida (1997) affirmed that the "yes" is never a singular yes, but a gift of repetition, a yes-yes that is an affirmation of a promise to be kept in the future, a yes between partners—never linear but branching. The school authorities with their yes opened their vulnerabilities to what is to come and to the unknown. With our yes, we continued to promise to open ourselves to the other. This promise already puts one in a relationship. A yes always involves an interlocutor. It is not

merely governed by the laws of the IRB-sanctioned informed consent but a resonant yes to consent, alliance, engagement or dissent. In this yes, the children, the school authorities, and the researchers are bound by a yes, and continue to speak, to be heard, and continue to keep the promise of a yes-to-come. Research tends to pre-suppose or bind the partners in a yes. A yes is always a second yes to the one that was spoken prior. The Waldorf school's child-centric philosophy had already affirmed a yes, before the invitation to the researcher, and children had already affirmed a yes to an organized, political struggle even before our presence as researchers.

A yes is always a second yes to the one that was spoken in response to a prior yes, and a yes is always an affirmation for the yes that will come in the future. Even in the children's dissent towards the school authorities there is an affirmation—a presence of a yes—to keep their places and secrets alive. Our second yes is a response that is made in the welcome of the other, and in continuation of the saying of yes, not as a mechanical process, a yes that is set in the memory of the first yes, evoked and reasserted again—a circle that is never enclosed but always evokes a different response in the research.

It is this eccentric yes that provokes diverse translation, creative misunderstanding, convergence and divergence that Derrida (1997) recognizes as the marking of counter-signatures. These ensemble counter signatures that the children inscribed on the Child-Map study as a final gift to us was incalculable and transcended more than what we had intended to receive. It is with the yes that children marked their personal and final signature on this work and I mark my co-signature.

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Appendix A
Child Map Instructions

1. Please ask your child to take you on a tour of the Waldorf School grounds. While you and your child are out walking the grounds, wonder with him or her if there is a particular place that he or she likes. Ask about a favorite or special place. If there is more than one, that can be included on the front side of the sheet.
2. Once you arrive there, ask your child to tell you about the place. What does he/she do there? Does he or she do this alone or with friends? Is there a story about this particular place for your child? Also make observations about how your child is interacting with the place. Depending on the developmental age of your child, he or she may relate information to you about his or her experience verbally, or show you in his or her play or gestures.
3. Record where this place is and what your child tells you and/or what you observe on the blank piece of paper provided in this packet on the side with the heading, "Liked Place(s)". Feel free to record this description in narrative form, as a list of adjectives, and/or as a drawing that you and/or your child make. How you record the description is up to you, and may depend on the developmental age of your child (eg., he/she may actually tell you a story, show you how they like to play there, or point to something there she/he likes, etc.).
4. Remember where this place is on the grounds. During the final step, you will be asked to mark this place on the Child Map.
5. Next, ask your child if he or she would like to take you to a place on the grounds that he or she does not like (if your child only shows you a place that he or she likes, or does not want to go to a disliked place, that is OK! Please include this contribution).
6. Repeat steps 2-4 using the other side of the blank piece of paper included in this packet with the heading, "Disliked Place(s)."
7. On the Child Map, located in the front hallway of the school, please use the pin with the light pink numbered stone included in this packet to mark a place your child liked. Please use the pin with the red numbered stone included in this packet to mark a place your child did not like.
8. Please place the paper you used to record your child's places in the book next to the map.
9. If you would like to comment on your own experience of the grounds and give us valuable feedback, please use the additional sheet included in the packet. Please return this feedback form to the folder, marked "Waldorf Place Study Parent Feedback," that will be kept in a drawer in Ms. Hillary's office.

10. For a deeper understanding of your and your child's experience of the grounds, a graduate psychology student from Duquesne's PlaceLab would like to interview some parents about your experience of taking this tour with your child. If you want to volunteer for this interview (30 minutes) with a member of Duquesne's Place Lab, please indicate this on the Feedback form along with a contact address.

THANK YOU !!

Appendix B



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Child Place Study

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PURPOSE: As a parent or teacher you are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to explore how children experience natural places at different developmental ages. You indicated that you would give a voluntary follow-up interview with a co-investigator about your experience of taking your child on a walk of the Waldorf School grounds, or your experience of interviewing your students about

their experience of the school grounds. The purpose of this open-ended interview is to talk with you about what you and your child experienced during the walk, or what you noticed about your student's narratives about the grounds. You are also invited to provide some feedback about the Child Map as a method for getting input from children. It will be conducted without your child or students present. This interview will be audio-recorded and will be transcribed by a co-investigator. The transcription will be de-identified by the co-investigator and your name or your child's name or students' names will never appear on a transcript. The researchers will study your transcript in order to better understand children's relationship with nature. Upon completion of the research, the researchers may present the findings publicly at a scholarly conference and may publish them in an academic journal or book. This presentation/publication may include anonymous, de-identified verbatim quotes from your narrative descriptions, de-identified photos of any drawings, and photos of the map. Any information or details that may identify you or anyone you mention will be changed or omitted.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

There are no known risks in participating in this study beyond those encountered in daily life. Participating in this study will give you an opportunity to talk with a co-researcher about your insights regarding your child/students' experience of natural places. Your contribution will help to understand children's relationship to outdoor spaces, and it can inform future plans for the school grounds of the Waldorf School and of other schools that value children's relationship to nature and help create a place that consciously supports their development.

COMPENSATION:

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your or your child's/students' name(s) will never appear on the map or photos of the map. The transcripts of the interview will be de-identified by the researchers and will only be coded according to age and grade. All markers identifying you and/or your child/student(s) will be

removed from copies of the documents that the researchers will archive. Portions of the de-identified transcripts from your interview may be included in presentations or publications of the research results. All consent forms and audio-recordings will be stored in separate locked files at Duquesne University with Dr. Eva Simms and will be destroyed within two years of the completed research.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh. You may request a copy from the school, at no cost, at any time after completion of the research.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Eva Simms at 412-396-6520 or Dr. Linda Goodfellow, who is the chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board 412-396-6326.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix-C

Child-parent interaction

1. What was your experience of taking the walk with your child?
2. Did the process change your relationship with your child in any way? If yes how so?
3. Did the process help you learn something new or different about your child that you did not know before?

Place- narrative

1. Did the experience of engaging in the child study change your relationship with the places your child liked or disliked?

Evaluation of the methods

1. How did the Method work for them?
2. What were the challenges you or your child encountered when administrating (during) the process?
3. Do you think the method allowed your child to express himself/herself freely?

Appendix-D: Transcripts

Transcript of Macy's Interview

Yeah, it's good to see how they explore differently.

Yeah, that's why I like enclosed play yards. I wish more of the parks in the area had more enclosures like this for the small children. Yeah. Yeah I swear I got to playgrounds all the time and

I'm like, I would design this so differently.

>> What about it?

>> Well, so there's this park down in Florida where we go to, it's the most, best designed play area, play ground I have ever seen. It's divided into two sides. One is toddlers so, Aged two to five, or two to four. And the other side is a side designed for five to 12.

>> Yeah.

>> And the toddler space is fully enclosed, there's only one way in. Which is great because these guys, they're off. They're quiet and they're gone. So you know if you sit kind of right there, Your child's not going anywhere. You don't have to follow them around for fear of them getting lost or hurt.

>> Yeah. You can see them.

>> Or taken or something. And even if you can't see them because sometimes depending on where they go I can't see her.

>> Yeah.

>> Or him.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> But I know that they're in that enclosure.

>> Yeah.

>> Because I don't like to hover.

>> Yeah.

>> Because it's not

>> I shouldn't have to do that. They need to be able to explore by themselves like this. This is really healthy for her. So the older child play yard is like a giant pirate ship with all sorts of climbing areas. And you can go under the ship and over the ship and off to the side.

It's just, the kids can run and it's open and it's just awesome. Yeah.

>> Like this is how every playground should be designed [laugh]. You know, the age appropriate, developmentally appropriate, safe, fully enclosed.

>> Yeah. [NOISE]

>> Still not time to find him.

>> Well you can park around here we can go to Subway. So many different playground around here. It don't make sense, they'll have, like Squaw Valley park which is in the fair township near park. Okay. You know it has an older play area for older children but yet all the baby swings are there. And I'm like, so the smaller play equipment is on the other side of the park.

But the swings for those small children are over here by the big children's play area. And then the small children's area is not fully enclosed. In fact, it has three openings to that border up against a creek that has a huge drop off. I'm like, why wouldn't you put A fence along that.

Because how many times have I chased my children out of there going, stop, you're going to go over the edge or go into the creek and there's like a 10 foot drop into this creek. So there's it again, I shouldn't have to stay within 5 feet of my children all the time.

It's not good for them, It's mommy's drink. You really shouldn't be drinking this because it's iced tea.

Oh, mommy's straw. No, no. I need this. Otherwise I can't drink it.

>> [INAUDIBLE] .

>> No, you're not going to hold it.

>> Why?

>> Because I need it for my drink.

Why? Why? Why? I get that from both kids.

>> [INAUDIBLE] .

>> Yeah so I think. I wish I was an engineer and an architect, because I think I would have a huge business in designing playgrounds.

>> It's a huge business, especially considering children.

>> Yeah, but it's not done very well.

I think communities are like, oh I'm just gonna. Shush. They're like oh we'll just buy a swing set and Put it here and oh we'll just buy this and put it there. They're not thinking about the child and how the space will be used by the so.

>> Yeah I think that's why the part of the study was important.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> You know so that we can get

>> So all the answers.

>> Yep. What time is it by the way?

>> It's one now.

>> Yeah okay. Hold on I have to pick him up. 'Cuz that's another parent I see over there. Oh your.

Classes are being cut, and gym classes are cut. And-

>> Yeah, there's a lot of-

>> It's just dumb. I don't get it. Kids need to play and run and jump, and be outside, and not be stuck inside. I mean, I just don't understand it.

>> I think there's this whole emphasis to create children. Them as adults and not realizing that they're just kids. They need to play.

>> Yeah.

>> I mean they can't be expected to sit at a desk eight hours a day. They physically can't do it. So, get up, let them run. For 45 minutes and then come and teach a class. And then let them run. I don't know. So it's hard for me to see how school is these days, cuz I just feel like it wasn't that way when I went to school. I mean, we had three recesses during the day. And we had gym class, you know?

>> Yeah.

>> We weren't just stuck at a desk as a kindergartener. [INAUDIBLE] That's absurd.

>> Even we can't as adults get stuck to that whole [CROSSTALK]

>> Oh I know. I mean I had a desk job. I worked in corporate america. I mean it drove me nuts. I had to get up like, at least once an hour to walk around, go get a cup of tea

>> Yeah.

>> Do something. I just, I couldn't sit there,
 >> Of course. [LAUGH] So, So anyways, so that's why we're here.
 >> Yeah, it's a cool school.
 >> Yeah, it's different, it's different yeah, very different. Okay before we start off, I'll just get your sign for the consent. It's just a formality,
 >> Consent to doing the interview?
 >> Yeah, just it has stuff like confidentiality, that your name will not be used.
 >> Yeah, I'm more concerned about just
 >> This is my son's name not being used.
 >> Yeah, it won't be used.
 >> I gotta shield him as best I can from things.
 >> Yeah.
 >> What's the date?
 >> I think it's the [INAUDIBLE]. So this interview would be specifically What's the child study that we did and just to kind of get an idea what were your feelings taking a walk with your child.
 >> baby babbling
 >> It was fun, I mean he was only three at the time.
 The one thing that was worth noting was that
 >> Three year olds aren't especially verbal.
 >> Mommy, Mommy.
 >> So, you have to really do a lot of prompting. You're not going to just ask one questions and expect blah blah blah and keep talking. It is challenging with a three year old.
 >> Of course.
 But I basically, I had her in my carrier and I picked him up one day from nursery. And I just told him, I said I want you to walk me around and show me where you play. And so I didn't do the whole grounds cuz I thought he had only been in the two so those were the two that I went Went to.
 >> Yeah.
 >> And, so we just walked back to that one, and I just said, you know, do you like playing here? And yeah you know, there were a lot of one word answers.
 >> Yeah.
 >> And it was hard for me to get him to say what his favorite was. And I realized maybe he wasn't understanding Understanding that. So I said, I had to change and modify it a little bit and say prompt him at certain places Do you play here, and point to the areas. Do you like playing here? I had trouble finding out where he didn't like. That was hard.
 >> Yea. You know I think he's three, he's oh yeah, you know.
 >> Mm-hm.
 >> But I, I said well, is there a place you don't play very often? Or, cause I couldn't get him to really get the whole I don't like that.
 >> Mm-hm. [SOUND]
 >> So I asked him, you know, do, is there a place where you don't play all that often?
 >> Yeah.
 >> And that's how I got him to identify. The sandbox and that play yard back there. So then I just kept clarifying. I'm like, so you don't play there as much, but you like the house or the rocks over there? So there was a lot of confronting.

And then I said, all right, do you want to show me something else? To get him really excited.

>> Excited. Yeah. So then we went to the front play yard. Which is my personal favorite, I love that one. And, cause it's, it's bigger there's just so much there. I think it's worth it, it's fun to explore. So that one it almost seemed like, because it was bigger, it was almost harder for him to figure out what he liked best, because

>> Mm-hm. There's so many nooks and crannies and corners. So I just kind of, again, walked him through, oh do you play on the boat, do you play you know over here? It's oh I play here. And oh what do you do here?

>> Yeah.

>> You know, and oh we, we turn over rocks and look for bugs. So that clearly became a favorite. There's a There's a circle of big stones with flowers in the middle and the boys and the girls flip over the rocks and look for bugs and things like that. So you could just tell through his animation that he was interested in that.

>> Yeah something about his with the bugs.

>> Yeah so that's how I got

>> I couldn't get him to do it. Was there anything else you want like to show me. Just kind of left some things open and undid.

That was pretty much it. We didn't take too long. He is three so, you can only pull so much before you are like I don't think I am getting anything else.

>> baby babbling.

>> Yea.

>> Brother's still at camp.

>> And what was your experience of taking that walk with him?

>> It was fun because, well, I was hoping I would kind of get a little bit more about his day with the experience

>> Cuz again, he's three. And it's not like he tells me a whole lot. I'm always trying to ask him, what did you do at school today?

And then I always have to say, did you play with Ben, did you play with the rocks, did you play with the silks? I have to throw things out.

>> Yeah.

>> But I thought it was fun, because play to me is so important. So I just wanted to get a sense of. What he likes to do. And that just makes me feel a little closer to him. He's out of my care for four hours a day and I don't get a detailed report every day as to what he did. This is a little way to get a snapshot as to, oh, when you are here what are you What are you doing?

>> Yeah.

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> Yeah yeah, so I enjoyed it, it was fun. And see there she goes, she's exploring.

>> Yeah. [LAUGH]

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> Okay, I'm good, I'm just gonna be for a while.

>> Okay.

>> Thanks. Yeah, I know. I know my sons are in there.

>> And you know, just taking that walk, did it change the relationship with the place that you with your kid, or the kid tried to, you know, with your child.

>> No, not really.

>> Because I think I had a favorite going in. Like I said, It was I still like that front play yard. I don't know. I don't think it really did.

>> So you had a relationship before with the place? Because when Matthew was in the little friends program he also used those same two play arts because that's where the smaller children play. The bigger kids play here. The smaller don't play here generally.

>> Yeah.

>> And so every morning in little friends you drop off your child in a play yard and every time you pick up you are

>> Picking them up in the play yard.

>> Yeah.

>> I know, he's not here. He'll be here in a little bit.

She's like I can't find brother. That's what she said.

>> [LAUGHS]

>> Maybe I'm biased in some ways, because I would pull up or I'd be in my car, and I can see him playing. In the space, you know, every morning during drop-offs, I'd see where he goes, and I go back to my car, and I always watched to before I leave see what he was doing.

And then when I go to pick him up, especially if I'm early, I would just park, and I could see what he was doing without interfering. And so, I like watching. See he can play.

>> Yea.

>> That already made me feel already connected to these spaces. Because I had that experience.

>> Yea.

>> Whereas in nursery school where he is now when I did the study..

I drop him off in the classroom and pick him up in the classroom. So it's a different experience. So I completely don't have that play yard experience that I had with him when he was in the other program.

>> Yea. There's something about getting to know the world of your child, that, you know, that allows you.

>> Yeah.

>> You have either the relationship with this place, or in the study [INAUDIBLE]

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> She likes [INAUDIBLE] .

>> Yeah she does. She's gonna have a good time in the program too. Yeah. It's a good program for the kids.

>> Especially young. I just think it's really good for the young children because I just think they should be outside developing their gross motor skills.

You know, the fine motor will come as they age, but right now it's all about

>> Climbing and balancing and walking and running.

>> Yea. And exploring their bodies.

>> Yea, that is why I like the outdoors play. Let's see if she can go up that ladder. I hope not since I am not spotting her.

She's good.

>> In a while taking that walk did you... Find yourself knowing something different about your child that you didn't know or something changed through that part?

>> Mommy!

>> I know, you can push it! I don't think there was anything that I didn't know.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Mommy, mommy!

>> I guess the only thing was, I just was hoping to get a little bit more out of him. Yeah.

>> And so that was just hard but, again, I have to be sensitive to the age and that sort of thing. I was a little surprised that he didn't seem to like the sandbox in the back because it seems like when he was in the Little Friends Programs and I picked him up he was always in that sandbox.

>> [LAUGH]

>> But maybe he just grew into and once he was in the nursery program he didn't like it. So, that was a little interesting, like maybe he's outgrown that.

>> Yeah.

>> So, that was kind of a learning about him. I made an assumption. I don't know if it's true, but

>> Yeah.

>> I just saw a difference between the year prior, always seeing him in that and then saying no, I don't really like that. Oh, okay.

>> Well, maybe you're

>> You know, now you're three

>> And you're not two anymore, and maybe you're onto different things.

>> Yeah.

>> So.

>> Yeah it kind of changes and shifts with [INAUDIBLE] that they like. Yeah, that was the whole experience of putting the bins, and getting it together?

>> I don't think he fully like

>> Understood the pins as much. I mean, so I was like, oh we have to show them the places that you liked, and things like that. I think he just kinda was like, oh yeah.

>> [LAUGHS]

>> I don't think that that

>> Really, I don't think he got that part.

>> Yeah.

>> I think for him, the part was like showing me the [INAUDIBLE] today.

>> Yeah.

>> Cause again, he was just young, and he saw me with a paper, and I was trying to take notes. And then I'm, oh, not to put the paper here, and put the pins here. And I think he just was, I don't care. He was distracted and was, this isn't interesting to me.

>> Yeah. [LAUGH]

>> So

>> How is it for you to put that pins, and you know, put it together?

>> I don't know that it was. There wasn't anything that was interesting per se. The only thing I started to see, like when I went to go do it was you can't help but notice where the other pins are, and to wonder like, oh It seems like, at least I put my pins in, I'm sure there's a lot more in, but there were several of the red ones, the ones that's not like pins in the sandbox, as well. I was like oh, and I just remember thinking, I wonder if that means I'll get rid of it, you know.

>> [LAUGHS]

>> But then, with the front the pins are all over the place, so I was like

>> Well of course because it's such a big wonderful space that has so many neat little corners. But I just noted oh yeah some people have favorites where I do and some people have dislikes where I do so I was like okay.

>> In comparison.

>> Yeah yeah you can't help but do that.

>> Yeah. But also to find your own spot and save it. This is my spot, yeah.

>> Yeah, at first though, I was like, I was trying to get my bearings on the map a couple times. I was like, okay, I had to go through like, this is a great play yard. Here's the house. I hope I'm getting it right. And then, of course, you're trying to put the pin in the place and like, I don't know if they're gonna know that this is The circle of rocks with the flowers in it. It's basically near that, but I was like I don't also get that. That's why I think I wrote about it to just to make sure that it was clear.

>> Yeah.

>> You can't have this. This is mine. [SOUND]

>> [LAUGH]

Yeah, I think it is something about the knowing the world in which your child lives, that kind of, and trusting. Well, again, especially because your children are going off and having a different experience without you. And as a parent Especially as a stay-at-home parent. I mean, I've been both a working mom, working and traveling, and a stay-at-home mom. I've had both sides of that.

>> Yeah.

>> You know, your child's gone from you for that period of

>> Whether it was day-care all day, which is really hard, or school, and that's like, they're getting different influences, they're having different experiences.

As a parent, you always hope that those experiences are good ones, and that they're happy and But it is kind of nice to get that little snapshot into their day.

>> babbling baby.

>> He is still at camp. We will get him in a little bit.

>> babbling baby.

>> They are not here, They are playing somewhere else right now.

She's very verbal for 20 months.

>> You like to talk??? Yea.

>> Oh my god, what about the challenges? What are the challenges of doing this study with your child? I know you mentioned some like

>> Yeah. Just the verbal because Obviously a lot of the parents did it with children who were in the grades problem and they could probably say "Oh yea, Mom. I can do this and this". And I have a child that is three years old and that was the biggest challenge.

>> Yea. I think one of the other things that would've been fun and maybe more interesting, I don't know, but it would've been, if he could've done it when there were other children in the playground, because then things might've been triggered for him.

>> Yeah.

>> You know, because he's three. He's young. It's so different, that if there were kids playing in the play yard, for example, and I picked him up when there are kids there and he could see kids doing things, that might have prompted more discussion or more memory or more something. Then just me after school's out and nobody's around, walking around and trying to act

>> Ask questions. Because even then, it could have helped me see how children use the space a little bit to, you're like, oh, there were children building things over there. I didn't know that. Maybe he does that.

>> Anna, stay back, stay there. Why don't you go over there? Wanna go play under the tree? [COUGH]

>> Okay, you can go over there, too.

>> You can go over there. I just don't want you going over in the road, okay? Yeah, so I mean, that could have been an Interesting.

No, that could have obviously biased it in some way if the children were just doing certain things, but it's just. Again, just give the full limitations of dealing with a three-year-old.

>> Yeah, I think it made sense without being, to just remind them of what they

>> You rather than being at the show.

>> Yeah. And especially, too, because I'm picking him up a couple of hours after he's already been outside, so, in those two hours for him, a whole different world happens. They were inside, and having story, and playing, and doing all this stuff and that's more recent in his memory.

>> Yeah. Go play, go find some stuff. Can you go find some rocks?

>> Mommy.

>> No, mommy's gonna sit here. You go find some rocks. Go.

>> There's rocks under there, yeah.

>> Yeah, look at that one.

>> [LAUGH] See I knew it would be a challenge like having a discussion with her around her because she's hands on.

>> Yeah. She's cool.

>> Yeah. Yes. [LAUGHS]

>> So, I think, yeah, that would be

>> Kind of have those spaces, and I can imagine many will order then you specifically have a concept of places you like. And just like Mommy.

>> Yeah, cuz you think about an eight-year-old versus a three-year-old.

>> Mommy, I can't, Mommy.

>> They're just so vastly different. And it would be in third grade and it would be oh, yeah.

>> You probably would have spent a lot of, I probably would have spent a lot more time with my son-Had he been older. But there were, so it didn't take that much time I don't remember how long it took, but it wasn't all that long.

>> Yeah.

>> Just because again, I felt like I had to pull stuff out of him in the first place. And then it just was like, okay, mommy let's go.

You know their attention span is not very big.

>> Yeah.

>> Those are your pants. I thought you might need them today, but you don't. We're not in the muddy spot.

>> But you're now mostly entrusted that you did this study. [CROSSTALK]

>> Well, because I think about the fact that just because my child is so young, I don't want any changes to this area being done without taking into consideration the young children.

Because You know, like I said, Matthew was in the Little Friends program and my daughter will be in the Little Friends program. And she's gonna be using these play spaces, as is he for the next few years because they're young still.

>> Yeah.

>> And I think it's so easy to just-

>> Ignore. Well and think about big kids are more verbal and they are more active and all this. Small children need special consideration.

>> Yes. I wanted to make sure, that you know, I helped out. Because I think it is important.

>> That his voice is heard. All right. Is there anything that comes to mind that you would wanna add?

>> So the results were just emailed I guess, right?

>> Mm-hm.

>> And I scanned through it very quickly. I'm not sure I read everything super detailed, I meant to go back and look at it again. But I liked seeing. Being a compilation of things. I did like that they look like they broke things down between early childhood and grades.

That's very different. I'm very curious to see what becomes of this cuz I do think there are definitely some improvements I'd like to see in these play spaces. Not so much my favorite one, I love that one.

>> [LAUGH]

>> I think that ones' great. That's like the best one.

The other ones, even this one, the front one, I could see some changes in the back one. The back one my issue is I just feel like it's so small.

>> Yeah it is.

>> I mean maybe it's not so small for her being in little friends but even my son who's in nursery I feel like it's small and now he's four.

>> Yeah. [INAUDIBLE] Oh yeah. Well she's wearing her boots though, so she might not be able to. She's quite the climber. But I'd like to see more wooden structures added. And even out in the front play yard, the added the beehive thing, which is great, but with a little one I don't really like. He climbs up there, but thing's. It just seems so high for me for having a three and four year old.

>> Yeah.

>> But I'd like to see that space added on to with other things and then the back play yard I just I don't know.

>> It needs some improvement.

>> It does. I personally would love to see that house Torn down, even though I know that there was some positive feedback about the house from the grades.

>> Yeah.

>> But as a parent of a young child, I do not like it, at all.

>> What about it?

>> Well, cuz I've seen some dangerous situations occur in it.

>> Like?

>> So that house back there has a door, and

>> And it has a window and I went to go pick up my son and a lot of times he was back in there and there were a bunch of children in and they were sitting down on the ground so you couldn't see them when you came in which is fine because it's all gated.

But another child had picked up a large rock, probably like this big. And put in the window and was dropping it. And I'm like, stop. It just missed a child. Just by inches. And the teacher can't see that that's happening because you can't see that there's children sitting back in there.

Because it's.

>> Because it's enclosed back here?

>> Mm-hm.

>> Okay.

>> So I don't really like spaces where

>> There isn't a visual on the child because young children don't have a concept of danger and causing harm. Like the grades children know that if I drop this rock and there's somebody down there I'm going to hurt them. A three year old doesn't get that so I didn't like that. And the other times I've gone in and they're

throwing mud at each other in the house. They're picking up mud and rocks and throwing it. And I'm just like, aah!

>> [LAUGH]

>> I don't think that would happen outside of that house, but I think they feel like, oh, I'm so far away from. From the teacher, I can do some of this naughty stuff.

>> They can hide.

>> Yeah. And they can do, and children who are three and four years old, they play really rough. And they just don't understand consequence. So, That's why I would personally love to see that just[SOUND] .

You know you could keep a structure with a roof on it, just open up the sides.

>> Yeah.

>> Or lower them so that you can see heads and things like that rather than having walls

>> Yeah. Yeah, it is to have a hiding place, but that is safe for the child.

>> Right.

>> Yeah.

>> Right.

>> So, I mean, that and the fact that, after awhile, it just gets so darn muddy. It's just like a giant mud put, but I think they could put more things in there, like more logs.

>> You know a balance beam, a log, maybe lower because they're smaller children or logs to climb on top of and walk around and stuff like that.

>> Yeah I think they are considering all the aspects of the child. Which is great, yeah.

>> And even the sandbox, I mean, it's nice to have a sandbox. It's kind of big for that space. I get that they're trying to accommodate lots of kids, but it takes up a fair amount of space.

I love the big tree in it though, because I love that it provides shade.

>> Yeah.

>> And I just wish there was more stuff that. And now that they can climb on and-

>> To have some lemons.

>> Yeah. But at the same time have places where they can run because when you're three and four, I mean my son and his friends just run, you know?

>> Yeah.

>> Cuz they need to move around.

>> Yeah. They have so much body movement that needs to be done.

>> Yeah. We'll see. I'll probably have a very different and Interaction with the playgrounds with her.

>> Mm-hm.

>> We'll see how she does.

>> What do you mean?

How?

>> I don't know. Is she going to be more or less adventurous than her brother? Is she going to be, you know there's a gender difference. So, is she going to be more sitting in the

>> Sitting and playing in small groups, like I tend to see more girls versus the boys are running and climbing and getting sticks and they do swordfights. Is she going to just be more, oh I'm just going to sit here and look at this bug or this rock. I mean I don't know, I'm gender stereotyping but I also know that I see that Yeah. An agenda happens.

>> Yeah. Yeah, yeah. It's a nature and nurture thing, I get it.

It's definitely both. I think it's more nature but [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH] > I guess depending on the parenting. But is she gonna, I don't know. I don't know what shes' gonna Gonna do.

>> You're curious about what will happen, yeah.

>> That's the most fascinating thing, you can have more than one child and yet they can be so completely different.

>> True.

>> And you're like, well.

Transcript of Allison's Interview

>> Thank you so you know, a lot of this interview was to get an idea of your experience seeking the

Do you mind if I this?

>> No. No, that's fine.

>> So experienced taking the walk with a child. And how was the process for you?

How was your experience of taking the walk? It was a lot different than what I had expected. She seemed more hesitant than I thought. I thought that she'd be very excited to take me around and say oh this is where I do this and this is where I do that but she wasn't.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> It was more of a secret.

>> Mm.

>> Secret things that her and her friends do that are, she would talk about it a very little bit but she would not get into details. For example? << She would talk about how they would play in the house and they would play roleplaying. But she didn't want to get into details about their story lines or their characters, or who she liked to be, or anything like that. << Mhm. I don't know. It coulda been her mood that day.

>> Yeah.

>> Or it could've been just that this is a space for her child time, and she just wants to keep it that way. And maybe even talking about it, explaining it To me would make it less hers or something.

>> Uh-huh.

>> She definitely had some kind of hesitation.

>> Yeah.

>> About exposing it all and I can only guess about why that was.

>> And to this sense that you felt that you were and she didn't, she wanted a risk like that.

>> Yeah.

>> And wanted to share but not share. Sure.

>> Right.

>> Yeah.

>> And maybe even that time she was seven, maybe she still didn't want to articulate things about it because it would take away from the. The imagination and the moment, or something. She was really vague about all of it.

>> Do you remember what she said?

>> It's hard. She was really brief.

>> Mm-hm.

>> And she didn't really wanna do it.

>> Mm-hm.

>> And I was surprised by that.

>> Yeah? What was surprising?

>> Because I was excited, I guess.

>> Yeah.

>> I was excited to

>> Learn about what she does in her play time here and yeah and she didn't really want to do that.

>> Mm-Hm. So what was that experience for you? To feel that she wanted her space but also this excitement.

>> Yeah.

>> How did you feel?

>> A little bit.

It was

>> It was I wish she could share that with me but she definitely has a group of friends that she is sharing that with so if she was alone

>> And didn't want to talk about what she was doing. I would be concerned. But she has a social group that she's sharing these things with, so that makes me feel good about it.

>> Mm-hm.

>> I think she's developing normally in that sense.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah I guess it was one of the first hints of someday she is not going to want to tell me every little detail of her life.

>> Yeah.

>> So that was surprising. It wasn't what I had in mind going into that. It was interesting though. And so then it makes me wonder if it helped you see something new or think about your child that you never caught. Yeah maybe even more so talking about it to you now because I'm thinking about it more deeply.

>> Yeah.

>> I'm thinking that was a first separating from the

>> Really needing mom today it was kind of a sign. I think we have signs but in our day to day life we might not stop to think about it but you're kind of making yourself to think about it and that's cool [LAUGH]

>> And what comes to mind when you think of these signs and then

>> [LAUGH] I think that it's really good that I have a second child, or I'd be heartbroken. [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

>> So I can look at it as, oh, that's great. She's adjusting well and having a great time at school, and I can feel good about that.

>> Mm-hm.

>> I think it would be harder if I didn't have another little one too.

>> Yeah. To go through. [LAUGHS] It's sweet, I just love this school for her. << Yeah. << It's really good for her emotional sense. They're really, Compassionate people here.

>> Yeah.

>> And there's a really good understanding of childhood.

>> And so that way you feel that she's in a safe place.

>> Definitely. She's not forced to do things that are beyond her, or to have unrealistic expectations put on her. I feel like that happens to children a lot. [INAUDIBLE] in public school settings. Yep.

>> Yeah, so he was [INAUDIBLE] the walk, but it helped you see her space, but also kind of respect it and see that she was in a safe space for her.

>> Oh for sure, yeah, I don't have to worry about her

>> Being left out or bullied or things like that. I really don't worry about that here. And in a different environment I might, because she is very sensitive. And she's learning to stand up for herself.

>> Yeah.

>> But I wouldn't

>> Feel comfortable if her classmates weren't also really, really, really nice people.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Definitely. She feels safe here, and I feel safe having her here. [LAUGH]

>> I'm thinking that you keep talking about her feeling that she needs to stand up for herself, and I think in the walk, it seems like she was standing up for herself by giving you something then not giving you something.

>> Yeah. Without talking about it, she negotiated a compromise, and just gave me that. She didn't want to tell me. I wanted to know everything. She didn't want to tell me anything, so she just gave me a little bit.

>> Yeah.

>> I don't know that she even thought that through, probably not.

>> Of course not.

>> But that's what happened, it's funny. But it worked. I was okay with it. Oh, that's interesting. She did do that. Even if she was hesitant to talk about things, it was still really fun.

>> Yeah.

>> To kinda get her

>> Her walk-through of the playground experience.

>> What was fun about it?

>> Just because, when I come here to pick her up and she plays outside, or, I have my parent eyes on, you know, what is she doing? Is she gonna get hurt? I can't see her right now. Gosh, can we go? I'm getting hungry.

So doing the walk, I put on Leia's eyes. And I'm gonna look at this playground and this space from her angle.

>> Yeah.

>> And I don't normally do that. So that was nice. I feel like As much as I don't want to rush her home a while, hey I need to go, I need to eat, I need to do this or that.

And it was good to just have this idea looking at this from her mind, she just got out of school, she wants to slowly go home, and that might mean. Messing around in this playground area for an hour before she gets to the gate. [LAUGH] They have different senses of time.

[SOUND] Or interests in being places on time or on someone else's agenda.

>> Yeah so they introduce you to her

>> Yeah. I talked with her teacher last year. They didn't [INAUDIBLE] time in first grade. I think they might this year, but he explained that it just wasn't, it was too early for them to really grasp the concept of time, and that kind of put it together too.

She has no idea if she's been here for Five minutes or 50 minutes if you can't differentiate it. She's having a good time then it seems very short. And if she's having a bad time then it seems like eternity.

>> Yeah.

>> These are good things to realize and think about when you're trying to get kids to leave places or stay places when they don't want to.

And how did it shift your perspective of seeing these places or taking that walk with her?

>> Yeah, just to tak the time to look at it. Just to stop myself from being in my normal routine. Cuz this is what we do at the end of the school day, when I come and pick her up.

And just stop and take the time to say I'm gonna look at this space from your perspective, and yeah that definitely shifted my attention of why she would want to linger, cuz it's, she's having fun, she's with people she likes. They had ongoing dramas, fairies and things. It seems like if she is taken home immediately after school and doesn't have that time to play then she's missing out on some aspects of the drama.

And the next time she goes to re-enter the story, she'll need to be caught up. I get that.

>> Yeah.

>> You know? [CROSSTALK]

>> What are these places that she took you to? Piles of dirt [LAUGH]

Dirt piles.

>> And you laugh because?

>> She plays in the dirt.

>> Yeah?

>> Yeah.

>> They build little

>> Settle down, carry clothes. When I was her age I had imaginary uniform friends and me and my two friends built

>> [NOISE] Unicorn play land, and it seemed like the same thing. Similar, you know? Similar ideas.

>> And so you could re-enact with that too.

>> Yeah, I could definitely relate to what she was doing

>> I remember how I felt and how fun that was, and how I sorta had this part of me believe that the unicorns were real, and part of me knew they weren't, but I didn't want to listen to the part that said they weren't.

>> Yeah.

>> Maybe that's why she didn't want to talk about it.

>> Out loud to me to much because as an adult I would be someone who could pick apart that this isn't real, this is pretend. That's a good possibility of why he didn't want to go into detail.

>> Or not take it seriously.

>> Somehow invalidated and make it you know? I'm thinking about it more now than I did at the time honestly. Reflecting on it more now.

>> What are you thinking about.

>> I don't know just the things that I've said out loud, a thing or two.

Most of really sat down and thought about it after filling out the paper. When we were in here and looked at the map. And I asked her to look at the map and tell me where she enjoyed playing and where she didn't. And we put the pins in the map.

It was different. Her answer, looking at the map, was different than her reality when she was

outside. I remember thinking that at the time, like that's interesting. On the map I think she put the The house and the tire swing, but when we were outside she showed me what she was talking about was this dirt pile under a tree, dirt pile behind the house

>> [NOISE]

>> and I do not know why

>> And the pile was near the house

>> So maybe that was a location point for her. To feel like the house and the

>> Maybe it's hard to look at a map and pinpoint where that is.

>> Yeah.

>> [LAUGH]

>> So I guess that made a big difference, between talking to her about it, and then actually doing the walk.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Cuz talking to her about it, I would have envisioned she's playing house.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Pretend family or something in this house, and swinging on the tire swing.

During the walk, that was not what she was trying to say at all.

>> Mm-hm. What was she trying to say? I guess the dirt behind the house, and the tree is near the tire swing. She does play on the tire swing, but on the walk, her focus was on this, where she had been building dirt fairy house land Did it change the relationship of the place in some ways? [INAUDIBLE] the like or the dislike, we hardly talked about the dislike one.

>> She didn't have a very good answer for dislike, I don't

>> And she was sorta kinda stumped on that one. She had said something about not really liking the wood chips. But it seemed like it was hard for her to grasp, I mean, to think about something that I don't like.

There wasn't a real strong dislike of anything there. And that was [INAUDIBLE] from the map, and then when we did the walk, she really didn't. I don't remember her pointing out or talking about anything that she strongly disliked.

>> Okay. And do you think it changed your relationship with the place, the way you see it now? I try to be more lenient about letting her stay after school, as many days as possible to play out there.

>> Mm-hm.

>> In that regard, I can see how having free time with some friends

>> After school is beneficial to her, as opposed to the school day's over.

We're going directly home and now we're doing family stuff. There's more of a transition.

>> Yeah.

>> Then your teacher's going home, and a lot of the kids are going home. But you can slowly

>> And I'm thinking that you're saying that it's a transition that it's also like you are your boundaries after the In terms of thinking before that there was an This is our plan, we're going home fifty minutes.

And now there is a negotiation. I-

>> Definitely.

>> Think you were trying to do.

>> To be more flexible about it, yeah.

>> Yeah, and to respect her space.

>> Right, right. I guess, in that sense, it affected me more than I I really stop to think about.

>> Mm-hm.

>> It goes more smoothly, too, when she does come home.

>> Mm-hm.

>> She doesn't have all that energy. She's more calm and able to come home and do her few chores and get ready for dinner and things like that. It is easier for her. [INAUDIBLE] the boundary with you.

>> Yeah, yeah.

>> In some ways.

>> Yeah, and we sort of did it and didn't even think that much about it happening, it was pretty fluid.

>> Yeah, very organic.

>> Yeah. Well thanks for bringing that to my attention, I feel like it happened and I sort of didn't even think about it, until now we're talking about it.

It did happen like that, didn't it? That's cool.

>> Yeah, it happens when you just [INAUDIBLE] talk about it [INAUDIBLE], something new [INAUDIBLE]

>> Do you think that the method was approached all the, like you know how was it, to just go for the [INAUDIBLE] just talk about the method.

What it good enough? How did it work for you? Did you felt that it was limiting? It didn't allow

>> Your child to have more feeling.

>> Well it was really open to an individual approach. When I was doing the walk I sort of felt like I could maybe use

>> A few hints that some open ended questions to ask.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> Because it was sort of hitting that wall.

>> Mm.

>> And but maybe that was okay.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> You know to just hit that wall. I really like the walk aspect of it.

>> Hm.

>> I thought that the map and the pins were so neat.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> You know to see. I had thought that I was sort of feeling from Leah that she might have shared more if we had done the walk as a group with maybe two of her friends and their moms or something. Maybe because of her age maybe she would have, but then again that was when I was still Really feeling like she should be sharing this stuff.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> Maybe it's, you know it's just okay that she didn't.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> Yeah I don't know, does that answer the question?

>> Yeah.

>> Okay.

>> Yeah. I think it kind of fitted whatever it had to be.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> And then you adopted it in your own

>> Yeah.

>> You adopted it. Right, right, and I guess for this many children in the whole school-worth of children its better to have it as flexible as possible.

I would there were some kids that just did what I thought Leia would do "I like to do this here and I like to do that there!". [INAUDIBLE] kids are

>> Yeah, yeah [INAUDIBLE] that.

>> Yeah, don't make me think about it, I just do it.

>> Yeah, and because she just does do it, it's difficult to articulate in words too.

>> Yeah. Yeah.

>> Especially if it's seven.

>> Hm.

>> It probably gets easier for the older kids to express in words what they like and what they don't like.

>> Hm. But were you able to see, notice any actions or the way she was playing or did she show you How would she play

>> You know when I am here she loves to show me what she does on the monkey bars.

She doesn't talk about them. So what do you like to do here? She didn't bring up the monkey bars at all. But when I'm here every time what I do on the monkey bars.

>> So it's a different type of for her.

>> Yeah. Yeah so I wonder if it's because she thinks some part of her mind says well, she knows I like the monkey bars.

Some sort of thing like that happening to her, think subconsciously or something? It was definitely fun to do. I enjoy doing it with her Talking to her about it.

>> Any other thing that comes to mind?

>> Not really. We're going to change the play yards starting tomorrow.

>> Yeah.

>> I'm excited to see

>> That looks like in the end, and what all the kids think about that.

>> Are the kids excited?

>> Yeah, yeah they're [INAUDIBLE] it's like a mystery or something. What's gonna happen, I hope

[INAUDIBLE], you know.

>> Especially because they were all involved in the process in some ways, yeah.

Yeah it's not just something that's happening to them.

>> Mm.

>> It's this ongoing thing.

>> Hm. In which they are equally a member in some ways.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> Right. That doesn't happen in children's lives very much I don't think.

>> Yeah.

>> That they feel like they really have a say.

The environment and what happens to them has to feel really good.

>> Yeah.

>> Those were my questions, but anything else that you wanted to add, feel free to.

>> I think I'm good.
>> Okay. Yeah.
>> Thank you.
>> I'm going to stop these things.
>> Do we get to see the results when you guys are all done?
>> Yeah.
>> Compared to the school?
>> I will, oh I'm looking on these.

Transcript of Interview with Liz

Do you mind if I ask you what was your experience in taking the walk with your kid or just the whole process with the kid?

>> So I mean I thought it was It is nice to get a chance to give her sort of a framework to talk to me about how she experiences the school.

It is not something we do as a matter of course or habit. We don't ask for those questions it is more along the lines of what do you do or whatever at school. So that was fun. And she was super excited, you know enthusiastic about sharing the things that she

>> Is she in first grade?

>> She is now in first grade. She was second year kindergarten last year.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> Yeah, no it was, I mean it was

>> Doing it was. Wasn't an enjoyable process. And it felt like, we did it really late. And, that was I think a factor of, How I just, I struggle about this all over the place by trying to get everything accomplished and then remembering that it was something in me.

Needed to be done during a certain time and all of that so those were like I wanted to participate and just keeping track of getting participation.

>> So what do you want to class to be?

>> I mean I try to be About where I go and it was sort of an interesting question and I figured R would enjoy helping out also.

>> What was your experience in taking the walk with her.

How did it feel did it feel different?

>> I mean, it was just As I said, it was nice to give her a framework to share her experiences, so

>> Yeah.

>> It was

>> That you could be a part of her experience.

>> Right.

>> Yeah. And how was it different from every day?

>> So

>> I mean the sun

>> No it is not a problem at all. I am enjoying it. It is cool in here but the sun is warm, take a nap maybe. [LAUGH]

So I will, in the course of asking her about her day It's more like who did he play with or what interesting things did you do or whatever.

>> Hm.

>> And often it's hard to get answers out of her, which is pretty standard.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> For kids. You know saying this was a study and then just asking her, walking around and asking

question her questions like what, how she uses the spaces and what she likes about the spaces. I think gave her a good framework. I think often times why she doesn't talk about things is because

you know she, kids and to experience it and then they're done with it.

>> Yeah.

>> And they don't really think about it so having something to look at, to help

>> Conversation was helpful.

>> Yeah. And especially kind of provided her to have steps and processes, and then you could see it and follow her

>> Right.

>> Yeah.

>> It's not

>> I think kids in particular, I think people in general but kids in particular that memories are kind of locked in

>> In there. And there needs to be a trigger to get them out and so.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> That, those were good triggers.

>> Yeah, that replaces all the triggers.

>> Right. Replaces with the questions. Helpful triggers. Do you think by taking a walk with a child changed your perspective or your views [INAUDIBLE] << I don't think it changed the relationship, no. But it was a helpful, It helped me better picture what her experiences outside are. Or but outside at the school are. As I said, I don't get a lot of Information and so by the time she is home she is on to other things and not really thinking about the sort of things she does at school so it was just a little window to see what she maybe does, What's the picture that you imagined?

>> Yeah, I would say that it was. My The experiences and observing her are pretty much limited to pickup times after school so I don't have Have a lot of access into seeing what sorts of things she's playing. So, yeah. She'll talk about specifically what she was doing, whereas watching her you only get so much information.

Cuz I'm not following right next to her. We are listening to what she is saying or what some things so having her explain it a little bit gave some more depth to. And well I don't, the variety of the things she does and the different spaces and how she How she engages with those spaces.

>> Can you give me an example?

Well for instance I wasn't aware of, there's an area by the, one of the driveways that has kind of a maybe it's a fountain or something, it's a rock structure.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> And they apparently play that as a ferris wheel. Space, and so I didn't know that they had thought about it in that way.

>> Yeah, a different way of seeing her world.

>> Right.

>> Yeah, and that you can watch and she has to be

>> Right.

>> Do you think that it changes the relationship of those spaces? It did for that particular place because it seemed like kind of an unused or, I mean I know that I hadn't really thought about it as a play space and to realize that she had used it that way. And it seemed like a lot of the places that she gravitated to talking about were. Sort of corners of nooks rather than broader spaces. I have a feeling that it is nice as a kid to be able to Be able to, I think she likes getting with her friends and just kind of hunkering down.

<< [INAUDIBLE] << Yeah. << You cannot see her that much. << Yeah I think that there's, they

create a small environment that they can operate with it. Now I know she does a lot of, Like large, motor stuff also running all around. Also but those are easier things to observe I And so this is to see or hear about that.

>> This was a separate thing from what you see?

>> Yeah right I mean the time that she is outside What I am thinking of are fairly small, they are short, you know fifteen minute spots or time periods where she is doing something without the same opportunity to get down And engaged like so I don't see those things that happen but She's in class and they're doing their outside time.

And they're out there for like an hour or whatever. << And you said that she was excited to do it. What was exciting? << I think she was just glad to to kind of show her. Her space you know taking a sense of ownership about her space and I am kind of proud to see what she does, how she frames it

So, sense of urgency.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah. Sense of power that she can now

>> Right.

>> Yeah, which she of course

>> Right.

>> Yeah. And where would the spaces that she disliked. What is your experience with that?

>> That she disliked? She didn't, if I remember correctly She didn't really identify I can't think of any spaces she identified the space that she most liked.

Mm-Hm. You know speaking from a parents point of view why was it important for you to see her space or enter into, what was that experience or playing any kind of part in that? So I don't Know necessarily how it important it is, just having had, she is my youngest but I think it is important for kids to have Spaces that are open space that are not necessarily known by their parents as a way t help the get out and develop as themselves so But as a curious person, so it's more I think, it's more that I've got.

That there's a, You know curiosity that I have about what her life is like.

>> Hm.

>> And she's young enough but she's willing to share some of that.

>> Yeah.

>> Her older brothers are

>> In high school now so walking through their schools with them is very much a process of

>> Trying to pull information out of them but them not really wanting to share very much about it.

<< Yeah. << And so it's nice to be at a place where she can talk, A little bit about it. It gives me something to imagine that outside time is like during the day.

>> Yeah. You can venture into her world but also respect her own privacy or space.

>> Right.

>> Yeah. If you were always curious to know

>> Right.

>> Yeah. Do you think that they were able

>> Any kind of challenges that you face. Whether it's adopting the method or, [INAUDIBLE] enough space to express [INAUDIBLE]

I don't [INAUDIBLE]

yeah.

Felt that like I could have school career or child care specialist.

>> Yeah, I think so.

>> Okay. And how is the process of pinning down in the maps

>> Yeah, and that was fine.

>> Anything exciting that happened? No. Nothing exciting. It was interesting to see once we got back to the map looking at where other people had pinned things.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> But no it was pretty smooth.

>> And what was the idea of it? Were other people were.

>> It was bad and also

>> Again so when I went out to this yard with my daughter the realizing that there were spaces that

she found

>> Valuable that I had not really even necessarily noticed.

And I think that there was some of that also on the map. There's a, I think another nook off of that space again beside the backside yard. Up against the other building that the other kids may, Here so, that I haven't even not considered as his face. That's one example of something.

Like, oh, really, engage in that space. So, yeah.

>> And, to see these different spaces that will

>> Right.

>> But we often

>> Right? << Right. << That's not good. << An interaction that happened recently. Not that I can think of. No.

>> Okay.

>> Yeah. Those were the questions that I had in mind.

>> Okay.

>> Yeah. You have anything else I can just probably add on or or?

>> Not that I can think of. No. We could stop this.

Transcript of Interview with Annie

[00:00:08]

So what was the experience of taking the walk with the-

>> The best part, the like most

>> Most notable part of it was that I spent lots of time with my kids at school because I work there. So they're there all the time. And I take them to school every day.

[00:00:23]

And I pick my sons up every day. But it was really great to have that time set aside that was specific for that. And to really have them.

>> Be able to show my husband, we were altogether when we did it, to show us the school from their perspective.

[00:00:45]

So we went on a saturday morning and there were a couple of other people around but there weren't a lot of people at school so they weren't distracted by I other things so they could really focus on it and it was really cool because i have never spent that kind of time them to sort of their there talking about the school and the grounds and what they like and what they dont like.

[00:01:11]

>> Yeah.

>> So that was the most striking thing about it was setting aside that time to hear them. Them.

>> Yeah.

>> And they were super excited about it.

>> Mm-hm.

>> All three of them were so excited to do it. I think they had heard about it, not from me, but they had heard about it from other kids or from their teachers, so they knew what it was.

[00:01:29]

And they had seen the big map in the hallway. And they knew about the pins and they kinda of had an idea of what was going on. So they were really Excited, the tricky part about it was with just my husband and I and the three kids we had to like, strategize, so that each of them would get to do their thing without being influenced by the other so they could each say their thing without being like oh yeah I like the same thing he likes or whatever.

[00:01:54]

So we really tried to make time That one of us stayed with two of them while the other one went with one so that they could do it really independently.

>> And your children are in which grade?

>> They're going into third grade and then two going into kindergarten.

[00:02:14]

Yeah so it was great, it was really

>> Fun and they said things that I had no idea about. And of course were drawn to things that I

would have expected them to be drawn to. Like the boys, both of them on their own went to the big gravel pile that isn't even on purpose.

[00:02:35]

It was just a big gravel pile that wasn't Been spread in the parking lot yet. But they both went there and both said, oh, we love this. This is such a great surprise.

>> [LAUGH]

>> And then there is a big pile of mulch somewhere else, and the same thing, we love the pile of mulch.

[00:02:46]

We want to play in this all the time. We wish this wouldn't ever get taken away.

>> Yeah.

>> So that was great. And then in play yard, in the back. My daughter's favorite spot is the big tire swing. And she talked on and on and on her thing.

[00:03:02]

Told all of the different tricks. That she can do on there, and was really focused on the tire swing.

>> Yeah.

>> But then when the boys came, I can't remember which one it was, but one of them said, I don't like that place, the tire swing. Oh, it's my least favorite place.

[00:03:16]

I really want a swing that just goes forward and backward. It doesn't swing Spin around, that swing makes me feel sick, I don't like it. I was like, oh, I had no idea that kids were looking for, you know.

>> Different kinds.

>> We don't think about what they're looking for, what other things they're looking for.

[00:03:30]

Like, oh great, a swing that just swings.

>> Yeah.

>> We don't have any of those and it's so simple, but-

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah, so. Mm-hm.

>> Yeah, that was great. It was great to be able to take the time to hear their thoughts.

>> Voice, yeah.

[00:03:44]

>> Yeah.

>> And there was also something about that I wish that this would not be taken away. So that was something that they were struggling. There was a big thing with that, and all three of them on their own expressed that to me. We talked about it a lot beforehand because all three of them came to it with this idea of if we say we don't like something, the school might decide to take it

away.

[00:04:09]

So we talked a lot about, with the swing my daughter was like I love the swing and she heard her brother say I don't like Like it and she got upset. If he puts his not-like pin on the swing maybe it won't be there. There was a lot of working through like, this is just to get a picture of what people like and don't like.

[00:04:27]

And it's not to-

>> Take your play stuff away.

>> Yeah, exactly. Not to take anything away or to make decisions right now. It's just to get an idea of the place. Yeah, that was really interesting. They took it really seriously. So like it was very.

>> Yeah.

[00:04:39]

Real for them.

>> Very real.

>> Yeah.

>> And probably because they don't get asked that often, that when they were asked it was like, oh, this is.

>> Yeah.

>> They really wanna know.

>> There's something about

>> Their opinion counts and that even if they stay with something negative, it will be taken away.

[00:04:55]

>> Yeah, because they would watch. As the pins came together on the map. I get there early with them in the morning, usually before other kids are there. And almost every morning for that few weeks

>> My boys would go right to the map to look at whose new pins were up there, and they always had a comment to make about oh look now there are a lot of likes here.

[00:05:21]

They were watching that change over the time period a lot. They had a lot of interest in watching what other people put on and they always wanted to go back and find where theirs were so they could point out their own but then they They were really fascinated to see what other people put up.

[00:05:38]

So that visual experience was huge for them. And for them, the actual having a special pen with these special colors, and that you all put that little sheet with the different grades would be this

color. They would check in with that. Oh, all of the second graders love this, and oh, look, you can see the fifth graders, they weren't really into reading the map and figuring it out and seeing the symbols and keeping track of what was going on and knowing their pins were in there.

[00:06:10]

Being able to go back and Find them, so.

>> And to compare the emotional landscape.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> Cuz there was one spot, I think it was the swing or it was somewhere in the play yard, that had lots of likes and lots of not likes all in one little spot.

[00:06:24]

Maybe it was that little house.

>> Okay, yeah.

>> And that was really. Be interesting, it was like, oh, so many people like this. And so then they would start looking at their grades. The older kids like it, the younger kids don't or whatever. Whatever it was, so.

[00:06:35]

>> There's a lot of opinion on the house.

>> Yeah, there's a lot of opinion on the house. [LAUGH]

>> Yeah.

>> Such a dumb little house. [LAUGH] But, some really strong thoughts about it.

>> Yeah. [CROSSTALK] And.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah, and the whole kind of division in terms of me thinking that's a dumb house and waiting for the eighth graders, it's addicting.

[00:06:52]

>> Yeah, it's really important.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah. And to kinda go back to your experience with it, it was much more like getting another perspective on your child and their world.

>> Yes, for sure. Yeah, for them to be able to to. I think I sort of thought, well if we walk around the school.

[00:07:13]

I think I thought the boys would want to go back to the early childhood play yard. We walked by it and I said oh we can go in and both of them Nope. We know what's in there. But I don't need to go in there. And, so yeah, I was surprised throughout it of what they wanted to go to.

[00:07:37]

What they didn't.

>> What about it surprised

>> I think I had some pictures of where I thought their favorite places and least favorite places would be, I thought they would be, I think I thought the early childhood play yard would be a favorite place. And it was just almost a neutral place, it wasn't a like or dislike. Like it was just not even on their list.

[00:08:04]

So that and seeing them, I mean I think in some ways they saw it with new eyes because they were being asked about it. So knowing that they had an official Intro place and then official piece of paper to record their thoughts on made them very intentional about how they were looking at things and what they were doing.

[00:08:26]

So I think they even and certainly was surprised by what they chose but I think they also were going about it differently than they would on a regular day going outside. Yeah, Especially because they had the perspective that if they'll say something then it will stay. If they won't say something then something will be taken away.

[00:08:46]

>> Yep. It was a big job.

>> Yeah. On their little shoulders.

>> Yeah. Carrying a big job. And you know, how did the whole kind of process made, did it allow you to know something different about your children in some ways, like, something that you were surprised, you were something that, I mean there were places but also about them.

[00:09:11]

>> About them. Yeah. Yeah, I think I think so. I mean I have, with the twins, I think I, you know part of what was surprising is I think of one of them as more of sort of the risky, like I would think he would be drawn to the monkey bars and the swing and And that kind of thing.

[00:09:36]

And it was his brother who I think of as more of the passive one, he chose the monkey bars as his favorite spot and the other, I don't remember what he chose as his favorite spot but it was a quiet place. It wasn't You know I would have expected him to pick the active engagement place.

[00:09:58]

So yeah, I think I did. My daughter no, I think I could have predicted what she would have gone for.

>> And she had gone for the swing.

>> Yeah the swing was her favorite, and that whole

>> That full play yard of like, she's running and moving and active.

[00:10:18]

But the swing, I think, is where she put her marker.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah, so she was also surprised with the boys.

>> Yeah, I think, I don't see them outside, I don't

>> Get to see them out when they are playing, you know watch them so I think I probably learn more when they are actually doing when they are outside versus what I think they are drawn to.

[00:10:45]

I think it's different than what I picture.

>> And how are they different in terms of different spaces? Like, in the playground and in house

>> Right. Yeah. And how they used different things.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah, because I just get a little glimpse of them, how they're using, how they're playing outside

[00:11:09]

>> But this gave me a little bit more of a picture of what kind of places they want to go to and what kind of things they're doing when they're there.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> Do you feel that it kind of changes the relationship with your child or with the place in some ways in doing this study?

[00:11:24]

>> Yeah, I think so. I mean, knowing what they really like Change my relationship with the place because I feel more drawn to the places that they like knowing that they like them. I was really hoping one of them would put a not like on that big stinky ginko tree in the front yard.

[00:11:36]

> [LAUGH] But none of them would because they also love it. They're like no that's the best tree in the whole [LAUGH] And so it made me like that tree a little bit more, no I hate it I really don't like that tree but. It drops those horrible berries that smell so bad and the kids drop them on their shoes and bring them inside.

[00:12:07]

It is a beautiful tree but it smells. Yeah, and I really, you know, they all, three of them, no, no, no, this is a great treat. So, I thought, okay, I can maybe, I can see, I have a little more connection to the things that they love.

>> Yeah.

[00:12:23]

>> Yeah.
>> So, in a different way, it kind of shifted.
>> Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
>> Yeah.
>> Anything else that happened where you felt that either the relationship between the Police changed or, you know [INAUDIBLE] our kids to, in some ways?
>> Ahm... no I don't think so, I mean I do get to spend...

[00:12:46]

You know I realise I do get to spend a lot of time... With my kids at school. More than most parents whose kids come in on the bus and go home on the bus. So I am there with them a lot, so I think I had some idea about I think about that I don't see their interaction that much but I probably do more than many parents do.

[00:13:13]

So no I think those were the big, I think it just gave me a chance to really see the spaces through their eyes, to see Even things that were new, like I think that gravel pile, I don't think they ever actually played on it with their classes, but it was nice to walk out there with them and see what they get excited about and what's new and what they gravitate to that they find along the way so And you know, anything that you thought was a limitation in the whole process that stopped you from your child from expressing.>>Yeah I do think the single pin was hard for them.

[00:14:00]

They wanted to mark lots of places, and we wrote more things on the paper, but I know that they really connected their voice to the physical pen. So it was like well I know I read those other things but I put my pen there so that's my big thing.

[00:14:15]

So I think that was a little bit of a limitation Because then they, when they were outside they were like I like this and I like this and were really enthusiastic about lots of things so that was having to decide was hard and then they had to pinpoint just one.>>Yeah they had to pinpoint just one.

[00:14:36]

And choose from, in that, you know, and we talked with all of them. We talked about it. But I like all of these things. Which one should I choose? Can you just, you can just pick one of them or is there one that really you feel like you like more?

[00:14:50]

It was hard for them to decide on that.

>> And I wonder with the visibility of the map as others there if it became

>> Lots of kids put theirs so maybe I should put mine there too. There weren't a lot of pins yet in the map when we did it so I don't know that really played into it.>>Would talking about putting the pin in too?

[00:15:18]

Yeah they would notice and I think for families after us if that was [COUGH] you know other kids notice that would be drawn to places that other people are and I think that was the only thing just the water. They had to narrow it down to one But the fact that they had the piece of paper too was really nice, I kind of bounced it out that they could then put other information on there that they wanted to.

[00:15:46]

>> And they just chose to write? Or what did, I'm not sure.

>> They drew, I'm trying to remember what they look like, they all drew and then I wrote, they told me things that they wanted me to write

>> I think that's how we did it. > Okay.

[00:16:03]

Yeah, I think one of the themes that come up is that seeing your kids in a different way or realizing how they utilize their world and their play in some ways. And they can become a dominate kind of theme in the study. > Yeah, for sure. Is there anything else that you found that you want to add on ask the question.>> I did wonder during the course of it, there was so much information and I did wonder if it inhibited.

[00:16:38]

I don't know how I I didn't hear about what the total participation was. It looked from the map like it was pretty great but I did wonder about that, if anyone was inhibited by the steps, this and this, if anyone read this and thought this is a lot I don't know if I can do this What about in the steps, that it was>>Yeah it was like good.

[00:17:05]

There was a page of instructions and I know for some, as a teacher I know for some parents they are like overwhelmed by Instructions. [LAUGH]

>> We give instructions.>>Right they don't want to take it. So I wonder about that if it impacted people participating but it didn't seem like it did.

[00:17:25]

It seemed like a nice span of families did but I do remember And possibly for me too because I got three packets with three sets of this and three sets of this that I was like oh this is the last [LAUGH] that was only thought. That was early on when we did it and I thought oh I hope a lot of people make it through this and then the map evolved It was clear that lots of people did so.

[00:17:54]

>> And you did the walk with your husband, I know that he and then you had, that then there were these conversations about how it went for him or something.

>> Yeah, he loved it too, that was his impression also was how great it was

>> Just nice to have this specifically be that time that we both spend lots of time there with our kids but that we don't really, we have never before taken time to just kind of it is usually like you guys play on this area while we

[00:18:32]

>> They take care of what everyone needs to take care of.

>> Yeah.

>> It usually isn't led by them. We kind of put them in an area. And I think the car seat just do the same thing. We take them outside and we say this is your area to be in at this time.

[00:18:44]

>> Yeah.

>> So, play here. And it's nice for them to feel like they can show us what they wanna show us.

>> What about it? What do you think they would like.

>> Ahm... I think that they have the freedom to move around the space, and... and they're like the guides.

[00:19:02]

They're pointing out... or they're going to the things. And I think that our kids, both in school and out of school don't experience that at school necessarily that much. In school it's kind of like well this is the time to do this and this is the time to do this and even though they have a lot of free play time, no teacher says okay go wherever you want, anywhere on the grounds you can go.

[00:19:30]

Just don't leave the property. Like that just doesn't happen for them so I think to be able to be invited to just To go anywhere and point out anything and play anywhere they want to was new.>>And as you said they were the guides right there is something there.>>That is a big thing.

[00:19:47]

They are not typically the guides. One of the, they are like ducks in a row. [LAUGH] You know following, right that is their experience at least getting to places they are shepherded and they are in that space, that spot. And I like as the plans for the grounds evolve I love this idea of getting the cars off the grounds so there is more of this openness to that property so kids can be, there can be more freedom because a lot of the restrictions on their movement are Because of vehicles and you can't have them running back and forth across the place where cars are driving.

[00:20:34]

So they really do need to be contained in this area, this area and what I am struck by is how much space we lost on the grounds because we have this play area fenced off and we have this one, and we have this one and that is where the kids go And there are lots of other spaces on the grounds that nobody uses because they are not designated as play spaces.

[00:20:56]

Because they are not fenced in for little kids or they are too close to the parking lot and on a if we could get vehicles off of the Grounds and we could be a little bit more broader. Yeah and especially older kids could just go out and have a lot more space to be in and a lot more different experiences because each of those play areas sort of has its own flavor.

[00:21:30]

And so when they are assigned to a playyard for that period of time that is what they get whereas if they had more openness they could be in the bushes while a soccer game is going on over there, you know have more experiences at the same time.>>And I think I Point I think that relates to the earlier point you made in terms of like it was this time when the whole space was available to them rather than this is your playground and you have to tell them the place that you like.

[00:21:59]

And there's something a shift in there too. > Yeah, for sure. > Yeah. > Yeah. That they own all of it more and they find places maybe they will. Only ever walked by because they're being taken from one place to another, that they have seen but they don't usually get a chance to actually play there.

[00:22:17]

>> Yeah, and then curiosity.

>> Yeah, that little shade garden in the back, I always see kids playing back there because it's not a

>> Playing back there after their parents have picked them up and their parents are visiting and the kids are having some free time. They gravitate to that little area because it is not a place that teachers take classes to play.

[00:22:41]

But when they are able to get there because they are with their parents, lots of So kids go there and they climb that rock pile and really that's a beloved space, and it's those-

>> Yeah, those spots that they can find and go towards.

>> And I think there is something about moving beyond the boundaries of these structures of teachers and playtime and then exploring different places.

[00:23:08]

>> Right, yeah. And that they want. it would be nice to provide more of at times. > Is there anything else that you want to add on or do you think? > I think so, I think that's pretty much it. > Okay cool. > Thank you. Sure.

Transcript interview of Kathy

Yeah.

>> So.

>> [INAUDIBLE] ,

so you know, I wanted to kind of have it in conversation before we get into the specifics

>> [INAUDIBLE], but you know, I was interested in [INAUDIBLE] with the whole child walk, and how we can [INAUDIBLE] about it, [INAUDIBLE] walk with your child.

>> Right. So you want me to tell you How it was, or?

>> How did you feel about it, or anything that you feel would be good.

>> I was sort of looking forward to do it, I thought it would be interesting to

>> Kind of interact with my son in this way, I'm kind of curious about what he had answer, I had my own preconceived ideas of what he would choose as his favorite or not, so it was

>> I was curious about it.

>> Yeah.

>> So that part, it was fun, I thought it was fun for me.

>> How old is your son?

>> He's seven.

>> Okay.

>> He's

>> He just, he finished first grade this year. So, I was not surprised about what he liked.

He totally took me to where I thought he would. Because he had already taken me there to show me all the fantastic, dangerous things that he's able to do with the tree.

>> Okay.

>> So I knew that he would take me there. He loves the area where he took me.

>> Mm.

>> It makes me nervous.

>> Mm.

>> So I felt nervous. [LAUGH]

>> Yeah. Climb the tree and do all that stuff. But he was very, very happy. I was a little bit more surprised about, or not surprised but more I was not expecting, I didn't have that many expectations about what he didn't like.

And I actually this to Denise, because I didn't put it on my form, I think.

>> Okay.

>> He took me to this ground, this play yard that there. And he told me that that was his least favorite, that he didn't like it much. That it was for the little kids.

Yeah.

>> Like I'm beyond this or something. But funnily enough, there were other kids there and they were playing. And after being there for, I don't know, five minutes, ten minutes, he started playing

with-

>> Those kids.

>> With those kids. So he was there, his least favorite

>> Plays, and he was engaged in playing and whatever they were doing. As that happened, my

thought was, my perception of it, my reading of it. But I didn't ask him this or I didn't know it from him. But my reading of it was That his interpretation of the least favorite place was actually a place that he would use, but would rather not if given the option, which I would have interpreted different.

For me, a least favorite place is where I don't even go. Right?

>> Yeah.

>> Like, I don't even want to go to that place

>> Place. I don't use it at all, but for him it was if you have a line from my absolute favorite to my least favorite.

I think he was picking something that was more in the middle.

>> That's interesting.

>> Right? Not something that I disliked so much that I don't even

>> Want to go?

>> Want to go there. It was on the range of things that I actually do something in.

My area, I'm going to give you the one that I would rather not go to given a choice. But you could still enjoy it.

>> Yeah.

>> You know just in a different way.

>> Yeah.

>> So I don't know I thought that was kind of interesting and strange and I was like I don't know how to, if I were on your side I wouldn't now how to interpret it.

>> Yeah.

>> Because Yeah it was a place that he would know how to-

>> Utilize.

>> Utilize and engage with. And he was having fun. I mean after four or five minutes when they were playing It was not like he was pretending to have been having fun.

He was enjoying it.

>> Enjoying it. Yeah.

>> He was really enjoying it so for a shorter period of time.

>> Yeah.

>> Like he did get bored faster than if I allowed him like he would stain the climbing trees, like the first area. Forever, but here he was.

>> And I think you're pointing out an important thing, that it's not important that as adults we feel

we dislike places, somewhere we don't even want to go. But with children, it's like, I like all these

places, but this is the one that I would not prefer. So this is like, I would not enter this Right.

>> Yeah, yeah.

>> And I think there's places he doesn't even enter, but they don't register in him as, they simply don't register I think is the point, I don't think they were there. So that was one thing, the other things, I think he enjoyed a lot Showing off how he uses the [INAUDIBLE] .

>> Okay.

>> Like I thought that Hugh liked having me as an audience, so I felt it was an enjoyable experience.

>> What do you think [INAUDIBLE]

showing you?

>> Like look what I can do, and look

>> Like all these things that I have practiced.

>> Yeah.

>> I don't know like it was, I do this all the time you know.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> You might not know this but this is something I do and I seem to be.

>> Yeah.

>> Kind of.

>> Taking pride in it.

>> Yeah, pride about the, yeah, and I also climbed these other things.

>> And you being anxious.

>> And me being, he loves to see me anxious, so I try not to feed it, but I fail. I tried to look calm and like I don't care. But of course I fail miserably.

>> [LAUGH]

>> And especially in some cases I really don't care.

But He liked that, he liked that I asked him, he liked that I was there to observe him, and he showed off a little bit [LAUGH]

>> Yeah, pride, [INAUDIBLE] process.

>> Yes.

>> Yeah.

>> Is actually, after we finish that, he was like, oh we should also come to these other plays that I also really like, and he kept taking me to other places.

So I think it was an interesting process for him to have that exchange. > And how was it for you, like the whole experience of taking a walk with him? > I liked it. > Yeah? > I enjoyed having him as a guide. Kind of having that feeling of he's the-

>> Leader

>> He's the expert. [LAUGH] And kind of playing that role of following him, I enjoyed that a lot.

>> What about it?

>> Kind of getting a little glimpse of his perspective. I'm not with him For most hours of work days.

So he's a pretty good talker.

So its not like I really have no clue of what's going on. He's good at communicating, but at the same

time I don't see him. It's something that I don't fully experience necessarily except When I pick him

up and he tells like I really have to show you this and he takes me and shows me stuff.

>> Yeah.

>> But he usually shows me only the stuff that he's over excited and can not help showing me, like

I'm climbing further up this tree.

>> Yeah.

>> You know I think this is super dangerous and you will be super anxious.

>> Yeah.

>> So you totally have to come and check me out.

>> But the things that were not as extreme that don't warrant him to explicitly tell me, you have to come and check this out. Or that even probably I don't warrant worth going after, you know, it's late, I want to be home, are we just really going to just walk around the whole school without a purpose? Like I don't do that. But these gave a purpose for that, and kind of see places of the school that I don't usually

>> Notice, yeah

>> Notice and that I don't see him in. I don't see what he does. Like I ask him stuff like do you ever come to these, like stuff I didn't know because I pick him up usually in the same yards.

>> Yeah.

>> Do you ever come here during the day? And he was tell me yes or no or sometimes. I was like oh really? [LAUGH]

>> Yeah.

>> I had no clue about that.

>> Yeah.

>> Isn't that interesting? It's like getting the story that he tells with words but with images [LAUGH], so it's more real, it was fun.

It was interesting, it's definitely his life. You know, it's a, he's totally The expert on that. So I liked it.

I like having that role of being-

>> The one who's guided through?

>> Yeah, being guided by him. It's something where he was fully-

>> Yeah. Without him being in doubt of it, and without me being in doubt of him being the expert.

I enjoyed that. I think It was fun, it was interesting. I liked it, it was interesting to take notes, it forced a level of observation that.

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> Usually

>> Like I'm observing and I'm paying attention to him, but to put it down in words it kind of fixes it in some way so

>> Yeah

>> I thought

>> Thought that was nice. I work on research, so I write notes, I do observations. But I don't approach my own life in the same way, like, I don't write a journal. [INAUDIBLE] for my, I don't have

a personal journal or anything like that, so I don't do that with a kid, so that was, that was interesting.

Not that there was really much anything enlightening or new about it, it was just.

>> Different.

>> Yeah, like a different level of consciousness of the same stuff. Nothing really new, just Yeah.

>> Very present. So there was and I really enjoyed going and putting the pen in the [LAUGH]

>> What about it did you-

>> I don't know what it was so very fulfilling in a way.

>> We are putting it in to the process.

>> Yeah I was like there's these thing that it was there and kind of being able to kind of be part of the process, you know very concrete material.

>> Yeah.

>> Thing. You know it's like the pin that's there.

>> Yeah. And then seeing the other pins and noticing how it was starting to take shape. There was that thing of adding to a full thing that you don't really know how it's going to end.

>> Getting-

>> But you're putting your own little thing that.

>> Yeah. It was pleasurable, almost to a physical level, you know like, how nice, I really enjoyed that part.

>> Yeah, I think what you're importantly pointing out to, is something about hearing, like the whole process to you was about hearing your child, but also in noting down

>> And then putting it concretely and then the pin was also something concrete to see.

>> Yeah. The pin was super concrete and I really enjoyed it.

>> Yeah.

>> And it looked gorgeous. I thought it was and it was very appealing so.

>> Yeah. It was nice, it was surprising.

I was like all these red pens there.

>> Yeah.

>> And Pen that don't like pen was the only red one in a sea of light pens. Yeah.

>> How interesting now I'm really curious to know who these kids are. And then I started noticing that the pins were coded by grades.

>> Grades yeah.

>> So I was trying to look what pins were there [LAUGH] And if there was something. I was curious about it, it was super informative, it was very physical. I don't know I thought it was I really enjoyed putting the pin.

>> Yeah. There was something there, yeah.

>> Yeah. Plus, there's a thing that, here, there's a project there, and you usually just look, like when you go to a museum. Yeah.

>> Look but then don't touch.

>> Yeah.

>> And here you're actually piercing the thing but you're allowed to do it. [LAUGH]

>> Yeah.

You're part of it now.

>> Because you're part of it.

>> Yeah.

>> So that was fun.

>> And it was to you in some ways like you know the whole process was not distant.

>> Yeah.

>> The project was

>> You and your kid-

>> Right.

>> The whole process yeah.

>> Yeah it was very interesting. I liked it, I liked that part a lot. I had a thought about I was thinking about it when I really enjoyed it a lot. And I have after having put the pen I like to go back and see how it had go back to the map. And how it was being populated.

>> Yeah.

>> And

>> I also find some pleasure in looking at a map and seeing that this is and this is Knowing that the kid is in the map and that I know who the kid, my kid [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

>> And I know who the kid is and which ones represent him.

I find that also kind of neat. It looks like a hole in itself. But it has a little part that I can identify that is his perspective and his experience and his view. And it adds to it.

>> It honors it.

>> Yeah. It's It's there.

>> Yeah.

>> It hasn't gone anywhere despite the fact that it has grown and it has more pins in it and some parts are blobbyer and redder or pinker or, you know it starts having it's own.

>> Shape.

>> Yeah it's own shape and it's own meaning. And I can see that.

>> Yeah.

>> But in that sea of wholeness, of it being a whole thing, I'm still able to recognize that there's that voice that I know, whose voice that is. And it's my kid and that's pretty neat.

>> Yeah.

>> I enjoyed the mapping both ways. The comparative thing, how has it changed from when it started.

Where's it moving, oh there's more [INAUDIBLE] here, so there's that change thing, but also the little.

>> Little things, yeah.

>> The little things that you can also go to the [INAUDIBLE] .

>> Yeah [CROSSTALK]

>> Very individuals, there's one, and of course I recognize my pins, and yeah, I actually enjoy my pins, more than any other [LAUGH]

>> But it's fun to see sometimes like the lone that's there and thinking, how cool.

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> There's something, there's someone saying something there, [INAUDIBLE] cool, yeah. And you can see the individual, like the lone voices and the communal voices, and, I don't know, it's the map,

[INAUDIBLE]

>> Yeah, I think

>> Strong, I don't know.

>> I think what you're trying to see in him might be wrong in that there was this whole kind of process [INAUDIBLE] individual gain, so that you can identify with that individual voice, but there are other voices who were finding [INAUDIBLE]

>> Right. And they're so, its individual voices and there's multiple individual voices in addition to our voices. But I also think there's a collective voice, there's a, and they don't They don't negate each other. They coexist very easily in the map.

>> Yeah.

>> You know like the blobs or the loners?

>> Yeah.

>> I'm talking about pins not kids. I don't know. [LAUGH]

>> [CROSSTALK]

>> [LAUGH]

>> But the collective of pins and the lonely pins they

>> As a whole, there's also like a whole voice. Something that's beyond the individual voices without negating the little individual voices, kind of. So that whole voice is the only thing [INAUDIBLE] to what you had said.

>> I agree, I think [INAUDIBLE] becomes the, parts kind of interconnect with each other and form this big whole, which is

>> It's own thing.

>> It's own thing.

>> Yes.

>> Yeah, and I think you also talked about the relationship and entering into your kid's world. I think that is something that I wouldn't think of like How did it change the relationship with your kid? And if you got something different about that you-

>> Right. We talk a lot so I don't think the relationship really change much. It seemed an exercise that was easy to do with him given the relationship we have.

>> Yeah.

>> It seemed like yeah let's add this to the

>> Repertoire of stuff-

>> [LAUGH]

>> That we do. But the one thing is what I said before about the writing it down.

>> Yeah.

>> Kind of

>> Having that same experience in this very conscious level was, it was interesting. And solidified it, and I remember very I think I wrote that I don't remember what I wrote. But I think

I wrote this

>> When I was looking at him, I've seen him climb both trees.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> Many times.

>> Okay.

>> He has shown me that many times because he really likes to show me that.

>> Yeah.

>> So

>> That was not surprising at all, it was not new at all. But sometimes I'm, often times when he climbs those trees, especially there's one next to this fence it freaks me out. [LAUGH]
 Dangerous.
 Because it's next to the fence and there's some hooks, I suffer.
 So anyway, when I'm there I'm usually very
 >> Anxious, and I'm trying to think. I'm going to be here, ready to trap him if he falls.
 >> Yeah.
 >> But I'm going to look calm and not anxious, so struggling all
 >> All the time with my own experience of the thing.
 But this time I was supposed to be truly observing him right? So I remember very distinctly recognizing his happiness at being up there. How proud he was of
 >> Am I good at this or what, am I not the biggest thing in Earth at that moment? You know, he had that look.
 He was up there, and he was higher than anyone
 >> One and he looked so proud and having to write it and be looking at him rather than having to be the mother [LAUGH]
 >> Deduced.
 >> Wanting to catch the kid.
 >> Yeah.
 >> I had noticed before how proud it makes him.
 Which is the only reason why I allow him to do it, even though I'm freaking out. With him doing it,
 [LAUGH] but I was able to appreciate it at another level just because I was supposed to be observing that. Like his interaction with it. So it was not something new.
 > Yeah.
 >> It was just that it allowed me to be there in his experience more fully.
 >> Yeah.
 >> You know?
 >> Yeah, and to enter his experience on his own terms
 >> Right I was not being the mother, I was just following him
 >> In his thing.
 >> Yeah.
 >> So-
 >> So that was-
 >> I was being yeah. I was I was more focused on-
 >> You were more focused [CROSSTALK]
 >> On him as he was doing it, rather than be too focused on how stressed out, or anxious, or whatever I was.
 >> Yeah.
 And that was interesting.
 >> Do you think that it changed your relationship with the place? The places that he disliked now do
 you see those
 >> [CROSSTALK]
 >> No. Your relations.

>> My relations? In all It made the school a little bit bigger. I had been to all the places He took me.

The one he liked, because he takes me there constantly to show me how he climbs the trees. But the

one he disliked is the play yard that's the first play yard I actually went to in the school, because that

was where we did the first picnic when we were about to enter school.

So, it was not like I had not Been there-

>> Yeah.

>> Before. But it's not a place where I ever saw the kid playing, really. I never thought much about it as part of the school. So now, it opened a little bit of my vision of that as Oh it is a play yard. My kid's sometimes play here.

>> Yeah.

>> Although I never see my kid here, although he's never here when I'm here and all that stuff.

That changed a little bit, I saw it more. Plus although it was a place that he really did not like there were, because it was for smaller kids, When we came there there were kids playing, they were smaller but they were there and they were playing and they were enjoying it a lot.

They were having a lot of fun so I was able to see other kids in action in that play yard. I really.

>> Yeah.

>> I usually just kind of drive past it and I see that there's kids there.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> With adults. But I never pay attention to what

>> [LAUGH]

>> They were doing in that yard. Because I'm on my way out. So it was a way of kind of like so that's

what kids do in this yard. You know.

>> Yeah.

>> Kind of. It made it more-

>> Present.

>> Yeah more real.

>> Yeah.

>> As part of the school before it was-

>> Just a big [INAUDIBLE]

>> Yeah I just had the big yard, the smaller yard. And inside the school the front for me or that other yard was more of The front of house. You don't really play there, you observe it when you're

coming in it.

>> [LAUGH] Yeah.

>> And sometimes when there's the fair-

>> Then you?

>> Then there's some action there, but it's kind of an overflow. We're so sort of [LAUGH] -

>> So much energy. Yeah but it made it more of a space to be used.

>> Mm-Hm.

>> In my mind.

>> Yeah.

>> Now that I do it.

>> Yeah.

>> It's all here in my head. Yeah, but it shifted something.

>> A little bit, yeah.

>> Yeah. And now also [INAUDIBLE] do you kind of notice that? Those two [INAUDIBLE] which we talked about [INAUDIBLE] different for you, or is it just.

>> Not really. Well, the front one, the one that he disliked became more [INAUDIBLE] the way I I say it's like oh yeah there's kids there. Kids should be playing in the yard. When the other ones that didn't although I don't know if it's true or not. Let me think.

Having him support my expectation of him choosing that the yard that he chose as his favorite one, I think in a way it solidified his. What's the word I'm looking for? His I'm going to say a word that's not the word that I'm looking for, but close enough.

Solidified he's right to ask me to go there. It's not to right to what I'm looking for but kind of his

> Agency. > No it's more like He asked me a lot to, let me come show you what other thing I can climb in that yard. And, See how important it was for him. It's kind of It is important.

>> Yeah.

>> When he tells me that, it's really important. It's not like, I don't know how to say that, it's just, it made me Interpret his own interest in that yard as it's for real. Like it's really. So when he asks me now, like I want to show you there something.

Sometimes I tell him no, but I know that he's doing it from a place of.

>> This is important.

>> This is important.

>> Yeah.

>> You know, like it's really important.

>> Yeah. This is a one place that I choke. He doesn't tell me this, but my reading is. This is the one place that he chooses. This is my most favorite thing ever when I'm at school. Which is most of his time.

>> Yeah.

>> So if

>> If there's something that he wants to show me, then probably it is important.

>> It is important, yeah.

>> [LAUGH]

>> But you need to acknowledge that.

>> Yeah. Like, there's these acknowledgment, like, listen to me. That's what I meant about his right to ask for this. It's like

>> So sometimes I tell him yes, sometimes I tell him no, but I'd listen.

>> Yeah. You know?

>> Yeah.

>> I remember this is important [LAUGH]

>> Yeah. And to kind of acknowledge that thing is a big thing for a child, I think.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Were there any challenges during the whole process, or how did the method overall work for you?

>> The main challenge was to do it.
 >> What do you mean?
 >> I had the packet with me for a while.
 >> I kept thinking, I want to do it.
 >> Yeah.
 >> I think it's interesting, I'm curious about it, I wanted to do it, I thought it sounded great and interesting. But I felt, okay when am I going to do it?
 When is it, I It's getting to do it. It's like going out to run. Running is not the hard part. It's-
 >> Choosing it.
 >> It's waking up, putting the clothes on and getting out the door. Once you're running, you're running.
 >> Yeah.
 >> [LAUGH]
 >> But you don't run every like-
 >> Yeah. The whole process.
 >> People don't run, why? Because it's hard to get out of the house and do it. Yeah, it's not because
 of running itself, it's getting to do it what's hard, and I found that that's what was the main challenge, getting to do it, I had the packet in the car for weeks, but it's too rainy.
 I don't have enough time, it's too short, I'm tired, I'm hungry today, I want to be home early today, you know like When is a good time to do it and I don't, he goes to after care so when we pick him up from after care I'm usually starved.
 >> Mm.
 >> I'm tired.
 >> Mm.
 >> I want to get home. I don't have the mind to fully listen to him. I wanted to be able to do it in a moment when I had the-
 >> Yeah.
 >> I'm here. I'm going to be present. I'm not going to be thinking that I'm hungry.
 That I'd rather be home. I don't want to rush him. I want it to be good. But When is a good time for doing it? And that was challenging.
 >> Yeah.
 >> For it to be a good time and for me to remember to have it picketed.
 >> [LAUGH]>> Both things need to be happening and I think that was the main challenge. Once I lo and behold
 I'm picking the kid up Early, I remember the [INAUDIBLE], it's sunny outside. I'm out of the car with
 a packet in my hand, and I'm like awesome.
 >> Yeah, now I can do it.
 >> Now I can do it, I feel so excited [INAUDIBLE], and actually when I came with the packet
 >> There were, this was because I'd started picking him up at 3 PM only on Fridays.
 >> Okay.
 >> So there was a bunch of other parents picking up kids during those days.
 And I remember when I came with the packet, I was like, I usually kind of talk a little bit with other

parents, so I was like, oh I'm going to do this. And a lot of other parents told me the same thing, oh I've been meaning to do it but I always forget it, that's right, I should do it, I need to do this next week, or [INAUDIBLE] motivated them.

>> Yeah, but I think, I read it also like they were having the same.

>> Same trouble, yeah.

>> Same trouble of, he sounds great, I really want to do it, but I don't do it.

>> Yeah.

>> I don't do it. Why? Because we have these aspects of our lives.

Yeah.

>> Yeah it's hard to pinpoint a single reason why you don't do it.

>> Yeah.

>> But for some reason it's just challenging to-

>> Yeah.

>> Do it.

>> But I like what you said about you wanted to do it when it was

>> You could be present rather than no let me just finish this task.

> Yeah. > Yeah. If not it wouldn't work. I would have the, it would defeat the purpose for me at least. So. > Yeah true. Do you think that the method that he had allowed your child enough spaces to kind of

>> Talk about experience and we make his voice be heard.

Only we could have done it differently that wouldn't help.

>> That's a good question. My instinctual response is that

>> Could be possible to hear more of his voice.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Rather than me. It's tricky with this age. Because they're not as little as when you think, well of course.

There's not much more that they can do. But they're not old enough that it's clear how to do it.

>> Mm-hm. I'm not sure. I don't have ideas, but I think, but my instinct is probably would be possible to To hear more of the kid's voice. I did my best to kind of portray my interpretation of his own thing, but it's my interpretation of his experience, right?

>> Yeah.

>> I really don't have ideas of how it would've been. Better.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah I mean you can always improve the things-

>> Right.

>> But I'm more thinking in terms of whether there's the staffs that we provided were enough for the child to have a space.

>> Right.

>> Yeah. That's a really good question.

>> Maybe I might as well have [INAUDIBLE]

>> [LAUGH]

>> [LAUGH]

>> Maybe. I think it's a really fantastic method. I enjoyed the whole thing.

>> Yeah.

>> It would be interesting to have something more direct from the kids.
 It would be probably harder to interpret than My interpretation of what I'm serving, my writing is much more I told him easy to read.

>> Yeah?

>> But maybe have something, and I think it was encouraged you know? Like they can draw pictures and if that's something that they want to do or So it was encouraged, it was not-

>> Yeah.

>> You're not allowed to do that. Like do whatever you feel that can be done. But the former is adultish in a way.

>> Mm-hm.

>> Right? I think it's good. I think you might be able to find something that more directly channels.

The children's experience.

Kind of like Have you, have you seen the visual voices project stuff? Have you heard about it.

>> No.

>> There's this guy. I work with him. He does this thing that's visual voice. It's called visual voice.

It's a methodology in itself.

>> Mm-Hm. Yeah.

>> So pretty much it's a series of workshops and it works very well with kids and they have topics and they create art.

>> Yeah.

>> On it. And it has a whole method of how to do it and all that stuff. Stuff. The thing with it is that it's more that's the method. It's something that the kid has to directly produce. This is, it's an option for the kid to produce it, but they would have to conform to-

>> Adult space.

>> To how it's done, like here you put what you like, here you put what you don't like or whatever.

>> Oh that's interesting, yeah. So in some way they would need to be willing to adapt to that. Which

is okay. As I said, I think it's a great methodology.

>> Yeah.

>> I don't think. I think if you leave it as it is, it would be fantastic.

>> Yeah but I think [CROSSTALK]

>> But there's other methods that really are like you're going to give me directly. Your.

>> Your voice.

>> Your voice directly, and kind of force more of that.

I don't know if you're going to gain a lot more, I don't know if it's worth it or not, you know? I don't know, maybe it's not, maybe it's enough to have it, even if it's channeled, maybe that's enough? Maybe that's all you need. I don't know you thought that it integrated with all the aspects that.

>> Yeah and definitely there was a space for the kids to be direct.

>> Yeah.

>> Ff that's what they wished.

>> Yeah. But it didn't push them to do it directly.

>> Yeah.

>> That's kind of what I'm thinking.

>> Yeah. And those were the things that I wanted to check in with you, but is there anything that you think you would want to add on to the And feel it.

>> No I talk to much. [LAUGH]

>> No I think I got a

clear perspective because you know

Appendix E: Children's Drawing

